

## **'What a Coalition Government could mean for asylum seekers'**

**(Based on pre election policy announcements).**

### **Refugee and Humanitarian program quota: Reduced**

The Coalition will reduce humanitarian program intake down from 20,000 to 13,750.

### **Temporary Protection Visas: Re-introduced**

In March 2013, Scott Morrison, the Coalition's immigration spokesperson tabled a private members bill in Parliament to bring back Temporary Protection Visas for asylum seekers to arrive by boat (TPVs).<sup>1</sup> The bill brings back the same TPV program that the Howard government started in 1999. Any asylum seeker who has arrived by boat, is already in Australia at the time of the election and subsequently found to be a refugee will be given a TPV. TPVs create a second class of refugees who, in contrast to permanent visa holders, faced ongoing limbo and uncertainty about their ability to remain in Australia, as well as deliberate exclusion from basic welfare and integration services. TPVs will be granted for a maximum three years in duration. Refugees will be able to apply again for temporary protection when a TPV expires but each case will be assessed again, with the decision based on current circumstances in the country of origin. Permanent protection visas will not be provided to a TPV holder within the first five years of their first TPV being issued and any decision to grant permanent protection could be done only through the no compellable intervention power of the Minister<sup>2</sup>.

### **Refugee Status Determination: Changes**

The Coalition has flagged the removal the Refugee Review Tribunal from the refugee status determination process. The current process will be replaced by an interview by an officer of the Department of Immigration and Citizenship (DIAC) with a decision usually within 14 days. If the asylum seeker's application is rejected at this stage, they will be offered a review from a second DIAC officer. A rejection at this stage will lead to removal of the asylum seeker to their country of origin or a third country. In addition, asylum seekers will not be entitled to access government funded legal advice. DIAC will direct asylum seekers to pro-bono services including the ASRC. All costs associated with legal support will have to be met by the pro-bono service, including any costs incurred by DIAC.

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<sup>1</sup>Scott Morrison MP – Speeches and Transcripts -

<http://www.scottmorrison.com.au/info/speech.aspx?id=610&page=-1>

<sup>2</sup> Refugee Council of Australia. Press release. 2013 Federal Election: Refugee Policies of Labor, Liberal-National Coalition and The Greens. <http://www.refugeecouncil.org.au/r/rpt/2013election.pdf>

## **Operation Sovereign Borders**

The Coalition will engage a three-star commander to report directly to the Minister of Immigration on matters relating to the flow of asylum seekers by boat. In addition, the Coalition will give orders to the Navy to tow boats back to their origin when it is safe to do so. A military response will likely upset regional cooperation, especially with countries like Indonesia who deny boats originate from their territory.

## **Offshore Processing and Resettlement**

Any future asylum seekers who manage to reach Australian territory by boat will be sent to offshore processing arrangements in Nauru and Manus Island. The offshore detention centres will be expanded by the Coalition. They have promised to expand Nauru by 2,000 places within the first two months in government. To deal with a rapid expansion asylum seekers will be held in tents before units are constructed.

It is unclear if a Coalition Government will continue to honour Rudd's PNG resettlement agreement.

## **Regional Cooperation**

The Coalition's policy is focused on bilateral relations to implement deterrence measures such as towing boats back, intercepting boats, and returning asylum seekers. The Coalition will seek to integrate intelligence and disruption services into a regional framework. It has also floated a policy that would involve buying boats of Indonesians to prevent their use as people smuggling boats. Much of the Coalition's regional cooperation policy surrounds a military response and ignores the requirement to ensure asylum seekers are safe from persecution.

**Thank you to the Refugee Council of Australia for providing the source for much of this information**

<http://www.refugeecouncil.org.au/r/rpt/2013election.pdf>