



## Asylum Seeker Resource Centre Election 2013 Report Card

Before you cast your vote this election, see where your party stands on the following asylum seeker policy areas:

POLICY POSITION	ALP	Coalition	Greens
End Mandatory Detention	X	X	✓
Oppose 'Turning back boats'	✓	X	✓
End offshore detention and processing	X	X	✓
Grant the Right to Work	X	X	✓
Oppose Temporary Protection Visas	✓	X	✓
Increasing annual refugee and humanitarian intake	✓	X	✓
Delink humanitarian visa 'quota' to onshore or other programs	X	X	✓
Oppose the excision of the Australian mainland from our Migration Act	X	X	✓
Remove children from detention	X	X	✓
Family reunion for boat arrivals found to be refugees	X	X	✓
Stop incorrectly referring to asylum seekers as 'illegal' <sup>1</sup>	X	X	✓
Issuing permanent visas for boat arrivals found to be refugees	X	X	✓
Oppose sending asylum seekers to Papua New Guinea for processing and resettlement	X	X	✓

The Asylum Seeker Resource Centre (ASRC) does not endorse any political party or candidate. The scores on the scorecard reflect ASRC's assessment of the party policies against their current asylum seeker policy.

<sup>1</sup> Although the ALP uses the term 'illegal' less frequently, they still do from time to time including the former Prime Minister Julia Gillard: <http://www.sbs.com.au/news/article/1761364/Analysis-Illegals-and-the-erosion-of-empathy>; Prime Minister Kevin Rudd has used the term <http://www.abc.net.au/pm/content/2009/s2719301.htm>. The Coalition maintains its usage of the term, even after being corrected.



# Where is your party going wrong?

**Mandatory detention** has been unsuccessful in deterring asylum seekers from getting on boats. The policy was introduced in 1992 and the boats have kept coming. Mandatory detention has also led to indefinite detention and caused mental health problems. This has included self-harm and depression as the futures of these asylum seekers remain painfully uncertain.<sup>1</sup> The Greens are the only party in favour of abolishing mandatory detention.

**Turning back the boats**, as the Coalition has advocated, is both dangerous and unworkable. Turning back boats of asylum seekers potentially breaches Australia's international obligations if there are genuine refugees on board. Since over 90% of boat arrivals in previous years have been deemed to be refugees, this is extremely likely. This would severely damage our reputation abroad, and particularly within our own region. The Navy has also expressed its disquiet with such a policy. The Coalition is the only party advocating this extreme measure.

**Offshore detention** is costly. The Secretary of the Department of Immigration has stated that it cost 80% less to have asylum seekers in the community rather than in offshore detention (and this is a very conservative estimate). The Department of Immigration has also expressed their concerns that the offshore processing centres on Nauru and Manus Islands are inadequately resourced to house or process asylum seekers.<sup>2</sup>

**TPVs** deny genuine refugees the right to a permanent visa, keep families separated and cause suffering and hardship for all concerned. The ALP does not support TPVs and was the party to end the policy in 2008. The Coalition would re-introduce TPVs if elected.

The ALP increased the **humanitarian intake** quota from 13,750 to 20,000 in 2013. For that it received a tick. The Coalition would lower the quota back to the original 13,750. Australia currently ranks 77th in the world, hosting 0.7 refugees per 1 USD of GDP.

**Excising the mainland** from the migration zone shirks Australia's international obligations by denying asylum seekers legal rights. Many politicians including the current Minister for Immigration labelled this proposal when it first appeared in 2006, as "undermining Australia's sovereignty" and offensive to Australia's decency. The measure has not stopped boats from arriving on Australia's shores, with many boats continuing to arrive throughout 2013.

There are 1731 **children in detention** facilities. It has been proven that this is severely detrimental to their health, both mentally and physically.<sup>3</sup> What will happen to unaccompanied minors under Labor's Papua New Guinea arrangement remains to be seen.

**Offshore processing** of asylum seekers who arrive by boat is supported by both the Labor Party and the Coalition. In relation to **Resettlement**, both the Labor party (with its new Regional Resettlement Arrangement with Papua New Guinea) and the Coalition (with Scott Morrison's TPV Private Member's Bill) have indicated that no asylum seeker arriving by boat will ever be resettled in Australia. This policy clearly discriminates against certain asylum seekers based on their mode of arrival, and is therefore not only hard-hearted but likely illegal under international law as set out in the Refugee Convention. Papua New Guinea is also a very dangerous inappropriate country for refugees to be resettled. Both major parties have signalled they are satisfied with dumping Australia's human rights obligations on countries that are overwhelmingly ill-equipped to cope with them.

**For further information on the policy positions of the major parties, follow this link:**  
<http://www.prepoll.com.au/policies.php>

1 Australian Medical Association: <https://ama.com.au/media/ama-calls-independent-medical-panel-oversee-health-asylum-seekers>

2 ABC News 'Immigration Criticises own Manus Asylum Centre' <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2013-04-16/immigration-report-scathing-of-manus-island-centre/4632728> April 16, 2013

3 <http://www.theage.com.au/opinion/political-news/children-in-immigration-detention-at-alltime-high-20130615-2ob73.html>