



STUDENT RESOURCE KIT

ASYLUM SEEKERS AND REFUGEES FACT SHEET

Every person has the right to live free from persecution, or from the fear of persecution.

When governments fail to protect these rights, people have the right to move to a country that will protect them.

This is the right to asylum

1. Who is an 'asylum seeker'? How is an asylum seeker different to a refugee?

- An *asylum seeker* is someone who has fled their country of origin due to a well-founded fear of persecution and has applied for protection in another country.

In Australia, the government distinguishes between two groups of asylum seekers: those who have 'authorised entry' and those with 'unauthorised entry'.

Authorised entrants arrive in Australia with a valid visa, like students or tourists, who then apply for refugee status. After their visa expires, they are granted a 'bridging visa', until their claim is settled.

Unauthorised entrants arrive without a valid visa. They are held in detention centres while their refugee claims are processed. They are normally only released once they are granted a protection visa.

- A *refugee* has sought protection in another country and has been successful in their application

A *refugee* is someone who is outside their own country and cannot return due to a well-founded fear of persecution because of their:

- Race
- Religion
- Nationality
- Membership of a particular social group or
- Political opinion

2. Why do asylum seekers leave their countries?

Asylum seekers leave their countries because they fear persecution (such as torture, imprisonment or death) and their own government is either unable or unwilling to protect them.

3. How many asylum seekers come to Australia?

Some 40 million displaced people are estimated to be moving across the globe. Recent figures released by the UNHCR relating to the 44 industrialised countries are shown for 2009 in the table below.

As a signatory to the **1951 United Nations Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees**, Australia has sworn a commitment to offer protection to people who have fled from their home country due to a real threat to their lives and/or basic freedoms.

By signing the Convention (and the 1967 Protocol), Australia declared its belief in the universal human right to seek asylum and the right of asylum seekers to have their claims fairly heard.

Asylum applications 2009

Country	Total	% of asylum seekers in industrialised countries	Country rank amongst industrialised countries
Australia	6,170	2%	21
Sweden	24,190	6%	5
United States	49,020	13%	23
Canada	33,250	9%	12

In fact, most asylum seekers are in the developing world. Pakistan alone is host to an estimated **2 million** asylum seekers.

4. Where do most refugees that come to Australia come from?

In 2009 the top 7 countries from which asylum seekers were coming from were China (1,186), Afghanistan (940), Sri Lanka (553), Zimbabwe (344), Iran (303), Iraq (288) and Pakistan (256).¹

MYTHBUSTERS!

MYTH: *Asylum seekers are illegal migrants.*

FACT: Firstly, migrants are people who leave their homes by choice; asylum seekers and refugees are those who were forced to leave due to violence or insecurity that may result from civil unrest, war, or persecution. Secondly, it is not illegal to seek asylum in Australia. The right of every person to seek asylum is enshrined in the UN Refugee Convention, to which Australia is a signatory.

MYTH: *Australia is soft on asylum seekers.*

FACT: We are the sole industrialised country in the world (out of some 44 countries) to have:

- an offshore detention centre (i.e. on Christmas Island)
- a policy of mandatory detention for all undocumented arrivals

MYTH: *Australia is being flooded by boat people.*

FACT: We are not even close to being flooded. Australia's borders are among the most secure in the world. The number of boat arrivals in Australia is very small when compared to the number of unauthorised arrivals in other parts of the world and Australia accepts only 0.03% of the world's refugees.

In the last 34 years, Australia has taken an average of 677.1 asylum seekers a year². At this rate it would take 149 years to fill the MCG once with asylum seekers coming by boat. The vast majority of asylum seekers do not arrive in Australia by boat, they arrive in Australia by plane.³

¹ 'Asylum Levels and Trends in Industrialized Countries 2009', UNHCR

² <http://www.aph.gov.au/house/committee/mig/detention/subs.htm>

³ <http://www.aph.gov.au/house/committee/mig/detention/subs.htm>



MYTH: *Boat People are Queue Jumpers*

FACT: “Queue Jumping” is a popular term often thrown around in the media and implies that Asylum Seekers cheated their way to Australia by not completing the processes in place to arrive in Australia on a valid visa. People seeking asylum are fleeing persecution. This means that they are often fleeing in haste, without the time or the available resources to apply for visas. However, more often than not the countries that people are fleeing do not have the facilities available to allow them to apply for protection in their own countries. In short, there is no queue for them to jump.

MYTH: *Australia already takes too many refugees.*

FACT: Australia provides just 13,750 places each year in total for refugee and humanitarian entrants to Australia.

This figure includes all people who arrive by plane and by boat.

Refugee and humanitarian entrants make up just 6.6% of the places in our overall permanent immigration program in 2010. That is the lowest it's been since 1975.

MYTH: *Asylum seekers don't need to come all the way to Australia to seek protection, they could stop in another country along the way.*

FACT:

- There is no queue or processing system for asylum seekers who come from Afghanistan or Iraq.
- There is no requirement under the Refugee Convention for a person to seek refuge in their first country of arrival.
- For asylum seekers who make it to Indonesia from the Middle East, the available countries who are signatories to the Refugee Convention and accept refugees is very limited. Indonesia is not a signatory.

From Indonesia to Australia, only Thailand and Cambodia are signatories.

TEST YOUR KNOWLEDGE!

- Do you think you know what an asylum seeker is? Find out [here](#):
 - **Play the computer game *Against All Odds!***
You are living in great danger and must flee your country! Will you survive? Play the game [Against All Odds](#): (requires Adobe Flash Player)
 - Take a [virtual tour](#) of a refugee camp
 - **Asylum seeker quiz**
1. What is an asylum seeker?
 - a) Someone who chooses to leave their country to seek a better life. They choose where they migrate to and they can return whenever they like.
 - b) Someone who comes to Australia legally to work, and then overstays their visa
 - c) Someone who has fled their country of origin due to a well-founded fear of persecution and has applied for protection in another country.**
 2. What is a refugee?
 - a) Someone who has migrated to escape poverty or to improve their standard of living.
 - b) Someone who is claiming safety or has migrated for reasons of natural disaster (such as earthquake, drought, famine)
 - c) Someone who has sought protection in another country and has been successful in their application.**
 3. On average, how many asylum seekers come to Australia by boat every year?
 - a) Between 50 000 - 100 000
 - b) Between than 10 000 – 50 000
 - c) Between 500 – 5000**
 4. How do most asylum seekers arrive in Australia?
 - a) By boat
 - b) By plane**
 - c) By swimming
 5. Why do asylum seekers leave their countries?
 - a) They want to make more money in another country
 - b) They are forced to leave to escape death or persecution in their own country**
 - c) They want a higher standard of living than they currently have in their own country
 6. Does Australia take more refugees than other countries?
 - a) No - Australia does not even make the Top 20 of industrialized countries in 2009 in the number of refugees we receive, and only 0.03% of the world's refugees and displaced people every year are received in Australia.**
 - b) Yes - Australia is one of the most generous countries in the world when it comes to the number of refugees we accept into our country



WHAT CAN YOU DO TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE?

- Invite our community speakers to come to your school and talk to you about asylum seekers
- Come to the ASRC to meet asylum seekers and refugees as part of our school tours programme
- Put up a display or posters on refugees in your classroom
- Use our resources for students to stimulate class discussion
- Run an essay or art competition in your school on a refugee theme.
- Host a fundraising event (such as a fun run) or have gold coin donation day at school to support the ASRC's work helping thousands of asylum seekers.