

# ..... a fair go for **Refugees & Asylum Seekers**

The Australian Democrats believe in a fair and non-discriminatory immigration program allowing movement of people consistent with both our humanitarian responsibilities and environmental sustainability.

Australia must uphold its ethical obligations under international law towards those fleeing violence and persecution. The lives of the most vulnerable should not be used as political footballs especially given that approximately 13,500 people enter Australia each year via the humanitarian program, compared to the almost 300,000 entering via the migration program.

We condemn the Labor Party's electoral tactic of continuing suspension of the processing of asylum applications of Afghans when 97% of Afghans are ultimately found by the UNHCR to be genuine refugees.

We also condemn the Liberals' intention of reinstating the so-called Pacific solution. The East Timor 'solution' proposed by Prime Minister Gillard is only marginally better.

The housing of asylum seekers on Christmas Island is costly, both financially for the taxpayer (in 2009 the cost of electricity at the detention centre was \$1.39m) and psychologically for the asylum seekers (with a majority of them having experienced trauma and/or torture).

Processing on the mainland with close access to infrastructure and services simply makes more sense than responding to populism to give an appearance of toughness.

The formal protocols to which Australia is a signatory require us to recognise political asylum seekers yet, as climate change impacts, the numbers of environmental refugees in the world will increase.

As a significant per capita contributor of greenhouse gas emissions, Australia has a moral obligation to address this problem, particularly in regard to our Pacific neighbours.

Australia cannot solve the problems of all 22 million refugees in the world, but we can increase our intake of refugees by reducing the numbers of business and family reunion visas issued.

## Our Plan

- Australia's population policy must continue to meet Australia's global **humanitarian obligations** in respect of asylum seekers and refugees, including provision for Oceanic nations impacted by rising sea-levels.
- All asylum seekers should be **processed in mainland cities**, thus reducing costs and ensuring necessary medical and social supports.
- By **significantly reducing the numbers in our immigration program** to a more environmentally sustainable level, an increase can be made to our humanitarian intake.