

Labor for Refugees



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WHAT DOES LABOR FOR REFUGEES STAND FOR?

Labor for Refugees is made up of party members and trade unionists who, in 2001, committed themselves to updating and improving Labor Party Policy on refugees and asylum seekers. We are largely rank and file activists in the party, many who have been with Labor for Refugees since 2001. We are not an official arm of the Labor Party and do not speak for the party.

At the 2002 NSW State Conference, Labor for Refugees successfully led the push for the improvements to NSW State Party Policy on refugees and people seeking asylum. NSW State Party Policy on refugees was updated again in 2007. Labor for Refugees was instrumental in the improvements to National Policy at the National Conferences of the ALP in 2004, 2007, 2009, 2011, 2015 and 2018. At the last National Conference in December 2018, a number of significant improvements to Labor's refugee policies were made,

These changes were adopted by Conference Delegates, building on a Draft Platform that had already adopted a number of positive changes to Labor's refugee policies.

Labor now has refugee policies that are much better than they have been for a number of years and these newly adopted policies will improve the lives of thousands of people.

A summary of the policies follows:

- \$500 million over the next five years to support the United Nations High Commission for Refugees to improve orderly regional processing and resettlement in the region
- Negotiate an agreement with New Zealand to resettle refugees there, in a deal similar to the one secured with the United States, and approach other countries as well
- Additional places in the form of Community Sponsorship increasing to 5,000 per year over and above the government sponsored places
- Adopt the crossbench's policy to move asylum seekers requiring medical attention off Nauru and Manus Island
- Appoint a special envoy for refugee and asylum seeker issues to advance Australia's interests on refugee issues within the region
- People seeking asylum will have "means-tested access to funded migration assistance, and to appropriate social services, including income, crisis housing, healthcare, mental health, community, education and English as a second language support during the assessment of the claim for protection"

The following motion passed without dissent:

"Labor recognises that successive Coalition Governments have failed to negotiate viable, timely and durable third-country arrangements. This has left refugees and asylum seekers including children languishing in indefinite detention.

This conference condemns the failure of the Abbott-Turnbull-Morrison Government to properly manage off-shore processing and regional resettlement adequately and for playing with the lives of vulnerable people.

This conference calls on the Abbott-Turnbull-Morrison Government to immediately accept New Zealand's offer to resettle refugees by negotiating an agreement on similar terms and conditions as the United States Arrangement.

If elected, Labor will prioritise the resettlement of all eligible refugees currently on Manus and Nauru to the United States, New Zealand and other third countries."

Labor for Refugees nationally, made submissions to the National Policy Forum late in 2017 and proposed many changes which are included in the 2018 Platform:

- Family reunion
- Need for a bipartisan approach
- Recognition of the need to address the reasons for people to take a boat journey
- Abolition of Safe Haven Enterprise Visas with holders transitioned to permanent protection. This is extremely significant and will affect at least 8,000 people currently living in Australia.
- Inclusion of community groups contribution to settlement
- Recognition of the role of Comcare
- Recognition of the role of state child protection authorities.

There have been further changes which certainly fit with our philosophy:

- Strengthened processes relating to LGBTI people seeking asylum
- Time limit on detention
- Working with UNHCR and Indonesia to work through backlog of claims
- Protection for whistle-blowers

All of these add to the positive aspects of our existing ALP Platform:

- Increased intake to 27,000 a year
- Independent oversight of detention network
- Independent children's advocate
- Mandatory reporting of child abuse in detention
- Reinstate the Refugee Review Tribunal
- Abolish TPVs and holders to be transitioned to permanent protection. This affects around 6,000 people currently living in Australia.
- Abolish the so-called Fast Track Process. This affects about 11,000 people currently living in Australia still waiting on decisions.

Labor for Refugees will continue our advocacy work on behalf of refugees and people seeking asylum and when Labor next forms government we will continue working to ensure that all these reforms are implemented.

Further reforms to policy on refugees and people seeking asylum for which Labor for Refugees NSW will continue to advocate:

1. Ensure no children are kept in detention. Rather, they will be placed into community-run reception centres together with their families.
2. Increase Australia's humanitarian intake progressively to 50,000 per year.
3. Close off-shore processing centres in Manus Island and Nauru and transfer all detainees to Australia for on-shore processing. This measure will provide savings of up to \$1 billion per year to be spent on other priorities.
4. End indefinite detention and implement a 30 day processing rule to be included in the Immigration Act (Cth).
5. Provide legal aid for people seeking asylum.
6. Increase funding for the UNHCR.
7. Ensure that the provisions of the UN Refugee Convention and UN human rights instruments, to which Australia is signatory, are included in Australian asylum seeker and refugee domestic law and policy.
8. To achieve the cooperation required to reach sustainable regional processing arrangements, reject policies which turn away asylum-seeker boats.
9. Maintain levels of foreign aid sufficient to address the root causes, improve conditions and the rule of law in the places from which people are escaping.

Labor for Refugees will continue to advocate limiting the use of detention to those situations involving safety such as for health and security checks. Where short periods of detention are unavoidable, Labor for Refugees will work to ensure the following:

1. Have mandatory reporting of abuse in detention
2. Create independent bodies to:
 - 2.1 advocate for asylum seeker children, with the capacity to bring legal action on their behalf;
 - 2.2 provide oversight of detention centres;
 - 2.3 establish an independent commission to inform the public on the facts on refugees and people seeking asylum.