



NEW SOUTH WALES

AN ALTERNATIVE AND ACHIEVABLE WAY TO DISCOURAGE DANGEROUS BOAT JOURNEYS TO AUSTRALIA AND BREAK THE IMPASSE

1. Clearly, all of the current proposals to discourage dangerous boat journeys are based on deterrence and there is no real prospect of any of them being implemented in the near future. Labor must act now to take action and address the root cause of people getting on to boats from Indonesia. The desperation of those in camps in Indonesia is the root cause of all of the problems- any solution must reduce that sense of desperation.
2. The reason people are so desperate so as to get onto boats is that they have no hope of being resettled to Australia from Indonesia. That is because of the practices of our Department of Immigration.
3. The underlying cause of the desperation is that the Department limits resettlement places for refugees in Indonesia to an average of only **56** per year from 2001 to 2010. From the beginning of this year to 31 May only **24** refugees were resettled from Indonesia, even though there are only 4,239 asylum seekers in all of Indonesia.
4. That policy has meant asylum seekers are presented with the choice: wait in Indonesia for an indefinite time, and likely more than 12 years; or get on a boat.
5. That artificial equation is the root of the problem and it must be changed.
6. Labor can immediately change that equation by giving asylum seekers in Indonesia (95% of whom are usually found to be genuine refugees, even under Howard) a definite pathway in Indonesia to have their claims fairly considered by an Australian official, within say 2 years - then they would not get on the boats.
7. This option would require no legislative change and would save the Government substantial money in deterrence and enforcement measures which could be spent on Labor priority areas. More importantly, it would save human life and would be consistent with our commitments under the Refugee Convention and our State and National Platforms.
8. This proposal would only require the allocation of 2,000 of the current 13,500 resettlement places to Indonesia. It is likely that the reduction in places for boat arrivals would account for that in any event.

9. The proposal would not create any 'honey pot' effect. If it is assumed that the current policies have the maximum pull effect, then it can be seen that the increases in numbers of asylum seekers in Indonesia has been very small.
10. In any event, there have always been very small numbers of asylum seekers going to Indonesia, over a long period of time, regardless of the policy of the day. Even now, there are only 4,239 asylum seekers in Indonesia.
11. This proposal has been tried and tested. It was the way that people were discouraged from taking boats to Australia from Vietnam the late 70s and early 80s. It can work again.
12. The Australian public is ready for a new approach to these issues. Labor for Refugees believes there is a real willingness in the community to look beyond the staid political rhetoric on this issue; and accept a fresh approach and leadership. Labor must provide that leadership.
13. Labor for Refugees asks that your Branch debate the following motion at your next meeting:

"This branch urges the Government to try to address the root cause for people risking their lives to make dangerous boat journeys. We believe this desperation is because they currently have no hope of being resettled in Australia in a reasonable time- and no access to any fair and reasonable process in Indonesia.

This branch urges the Labor Government to break the current impasse and show leadership by addressing the desperation of asylum seekers in camps in Indonesia. We urge the Labor Government to immediately institute a realistic and sensible resettlement process which gives hope to genuine refugees that they will be brought to Australia within 2 years if they are genuine refugees without having to get on a boat."

14. Labor for Refugees would be very happy to provide further information to your Branch on request- or to speak at a meeting of your Branch

Please feel free at conference to speak to:

Shane Prince

Co-convenor Labor for Refugees

or;

Nizza Siano

Secretary of Labor for Refugees

14 July 2012