

# Labor for Refugees



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**A LABOR FOR REFUGEES (NSW) PUBLICATION**

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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 people seeking asylum. We are largely rank and file activists in the party, many who have been with Labor for Refugees since 2001. While we do not speak for the Labor Party in a formal sense, our aims have broad support.

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. That policy was updated again in 2007. Labor for Refugees was also instrumental in the improvements to National Policy at the ALP National Conferences in 2004, 2007, 2009, 2011, 2015, 2018 and 2021. At the last Special Platform Conference in 2021, a number of significant improvements to Labor's refugee policies were made as follows:

- clear and efficient pathways to citizenship for vulnerable groups of migrants and permanent protection visa holders
- detention (where necessary) to occur in a Government-run immigration detention centre, appropriately located close to services and relevant support
- the establishment of an independent Refugee Review Tribunal

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 will improve the lives of thousands of people.

A summary of the policies follows:

### PERMANENT PROTECTION

- Abolish Temporary Protection Visas (TPVs) and Safe Haven Enterprise Visas (SHEVs) and transition holders to permanent protection - at least 18,000 people currently living in Australia.

### FAIR PROCESSING

- Abolish the Immigration Assessment Authority and create an independent Refugee Review Tribunal.
- Abolish the existing Fast Track Process - about 4,500 people currently living in Australia are still waiting on decisions.
- 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.

### FAMILY REUNION

- Family reunion is important to successful resettlement. Labor will prioritise applications for citizenship by families, partners and children to ensure families are kept together.

### REFUGEE CONVENTION

- Reintroduce appropriate references to the Refugee Convention into the Migration Act 1958.
- Progressively increase our humanitarian intake to 27,000 a year.
- Progressively increase community sponsorship places to 5,000 per year in addition to government sponsored places.
- Significantly increase funding to support the United Nations High Commission for Refugees to improve orderly regional processing and resettlement in the region.
- Recognize the need to create an orderly pathway to resettlement in Australia to provide an alternative to a boat journey.
- Work with the UNHCR and Indonesia to work through the backlog of claims.

## **DETENTION**

- Negotiate an agreement with New Zealand to resettle refugees there, similar to the one secured with the United States and approach other countries as well.
- Improve the medical transfer process for asylum seekers from Nauru and PNG requiring medical attention.
- Strive to ensure that detention is for no longer than 90 days.
- Recognize the role of Comcare enabling it to fulfill its regulatory obligations.
- Create independent and transparent oversight of detention network.
- Appoint a children's advocate independent of the Department of Home Affairs.
- Legislate to impose mandatory reporting of child abuse in detention.
- Recognize the role of state child protection authorities.

### **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. 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.
7. To achieve the cooperation required to reach sustainable regional processing arrangements, reject policies which turn away asylum-seeker boats.
8. 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. Mandatory reporting of abuse in detention.
2. The establishment of an independent commission to inform the public on the facts on refugees and people seeking asylum.

## **BECOME A MEMBER**

By joining Labor for Refugees, you will be supporting a change in ALP policy compatible with the policy objectives as follows:

1. All people seeking asylum to be treated with compassion, justice and in accordance with Australia's international obligations.
2. The right of all people seeking asylum to have their status as refugees assessed on Australian soil, under the Australian legal system.
3. People seeking asylum to be accommodated in government run and urban-based reception centres. When a formal application for refugee status has been made and security, health and identity checks are complete, asylum seekers are free to move out of reception centres and to stay in supportive communities. The time in detention not to exceed 30 days without judicial review and the right of appeal.

The link to our membership form is [www.labor4refugees.com/membership](http://www.labor4refugees.com/membership)