

A Just Australia

Myths and facts about refugees and asylum seekers

Taken from the **A Just Australia** website:

<http://www.ajustaustralia.com/info/mythsfacts.php>

We hear a great deal about 'illegal boat arrivals', 'detention centres' and 'border protection'. It's almost all spin. There is no threat to Australia's borders, no 'flood of illegals', and no 'influx of boat arrivals'.

A trickle, not a flood

The numbers in Australia are very small. In 2009, there were 2 497 successful visa applications, mostly families. In Europe, there were 286 680 applications (114 times as many). In North America, there were 82 270 (32 times as many).

Going down, not up

Ten years ago, there were twice as many asylum applications as there were last year. All up, there are 20 919 refugees in Australia - a tiny fraction of the worldwide total (15.2 million) and less than one tenth of one percent of the Australian population.

Victims of circumstances outside their control

People who apply for asylum are people who have been forced to flee their homelands. Many face persecution and imprisonment. Some face death. Most have lost everything they own. They come here to start a new life. Because we live in a country which is safe and secure, it is hard for us to imagine what this must be like. Sadly, one refugee in two (44 percent) is a child.

Safety first

Everyone who comes into this country undergoes rigorous Australian government security checks. They are fleeing *from* security threats, not creating new ones.

Not 'illegals'

These people have jumped no queues and broken no rules. They are not 'illegals' - since when was fleeing persecution a crime? It is **not** illegal to seek asylum without a visa. 90 percent of boat arrivals are genuine refugees.

Following the rules

When people are granted permanent residency, they have exactly the same rights and obligations as the rest of us - like obeying Australian laws and paying Australian taxes.

A long and proud history

These people are nothing new. In Australia, we have a long and proud history of providing a fresh start to people fleeing persecution. Since Federation, we have accepted more than 740 000 of them - hardworking Australians who have helped make Australia the country it is today; like scientist Dr Karl Kuschelnicki and Westfield founder and Socceroos head Frank Lowy.

All these boats...

In truth, there are not that many. In 2008-9, we granted a total of 2 497 onshore protection and humanitarian visas - fewer than half came by boat.

Why here? Can't they go somewhere else?

Overwhelmingly, they do. By world standards, very few people come to Australia. Other countries get far more asylum applications than we do. Sweden, a country with half our population, gets four times as many asylum applications. North America, 13 times as many. Germany has 28 times more refugees.

But we're being swamped ...

No, we're not. Worldwide, there are 15.2 million refugees; of those, we have just 20 919 - a tiny fraction, and equivalent to one tenth of one percent of the Australian population.

They're a security threat

No, they're not. Everyone who comes here is required to undergo a rigorous Australian Government security check. These people are fleeing from persecution - fleeing *from* security threats, not creating new ones.

They're still breaking the rules

No, they're not. These people have jumped no queues and broken no rules. When you're running for your life, there's no such thing as an orderly queue. There are no rules. Think about it - would you risk your kids' lives while you waited for a piece of paper? It is not illegal to seek asylum without a visa.

They're a drain on the economy

When someone is granted residency, they have the same rights and obligations as the rest of us - like obeying Australian laws and paying Australian taxes. The Australian economy has always been built on the back of immigration. Most people who come here for protection give much more than they take - like Westfield founder Frank Lowy.

Our cities are already splitting at the seams. We can't take any more...

It sometimes seems that way, but this has nothing to do with people who apply for asylum. Every year, our population increases by around 300 000 - these people account for only 2 497 (that's less than one percent).

But don't we get to decide who comes in?

We do. Almost everyone who comes here does so by the usual migration channels. Everyone who applies for asylum is individually assessed by the Australian Government. Remember, only people who can prove that they were fleeing from persecution get a visa.