

# ECCV Position Paper

## Asylum Seekers

---

1. ECCV emphasises that asylum seekers are owed the legal right to seek protection in Australia under its signed international agreement with the UN Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees.
2. ECCV is aware that:
  - the 21<sup>st</sup> century has seen a considerable acceleration in the global movement of people and
  - in Australia considerable political and public debate has been generated by the relatively small numbers of asylum seekers arriving by boat.
3. ECCV advocates, first and foremost, for a compassionate and humanitarian approach to the treatment of asylum seekers, in particular of those who travel irregularly by sea to Australia.
4. ECCV cautions against the use of labels in the mass media that create a false impression of fear and suspicion, for example in Australia asylum seekers are commonly called 'boat people', 'illegals' or 'queue jumpers' whereas in the UN agreements signed by the Australian Government they are described as Irregular Maritime Arrival (IMA) and non-IMA (i.e. air arrival) asylum seekers who are legally seeking protection.
5. ECCV encourages all political parties in Australia to cooperate on a consistent cross-party approach to finding fair and equitable solutions in dealing with migration issues concerning people seeking international protection as asylum seekers whether they arrive by air or sea.
6. ECCV would like to see the Australian Government shift its focus from increasing border protection and deterring people smugglers towards highlighting the plight of asylum seekers as victims of international, humanitarian crises and of those who prey on desperate people seeking offers of hope for a better life.
7. ECCV supports the Federal Government's decision to process asylum seekers who arrive by boat in the same way as asylum seekers who arrive by airplane and we advocate for speedy processing of their claims.
8. ECCV accepts that asylum seekers and refugees must not be treated as lesser individuals than any Australian resident.
9. ECCV believes that the central issue regarding the onshore/offshore debate is the timely processing and assessment of applications in a fair, adequate and appropriate manner that upholds all basic human rights and needs of the asylum seeker applicants such as education, housing and culturally responsive health care.

10. ECCV believes that asylum seekers deserve adequate mental health care as mandatory detention over prolonged periods of time can cause severe mental anguish and undue suffering.
11. ECCV advocates for culturally appropriate and adequate mental health support for asylum seekers in detention centres whilst they are waiting for their refugee status to be processed.
12. Given that Australia is the only western nation to maintain mandatory detention for undocumented immigrants who arrive by sea, ECCV encourages the Australian Government to explore other humane options of support to identify, welcome, integrate and protect them.
13. ECCV is working to dispel myths and public misconceptions about asylum seekers for example some 'boat people' are fleeing life-threatening situations and others have experienced hardship [in transit source](#) countries, which may not even be their countries of origin, to seek international protection.
14. ECCV asserts that asylum seekers are not a burden to our welfare resources, as they do not receive greater benefits than ordinary Australians in need of assistance. Rather, many successful applicants for refugee status make an enormous economic and cultural contribution to the Australian economy.
15. ECCV points out that the asylum seekers should not be treated as criminals and that it is not a criminal offence for people to seek protection in Australia but rather a legal international right.
16. ECCV believes asylum seekers should not be feared or viewed as unwelcome guests since many become refugees and immigrants who embrace life in Australia with hard work, both as volunteers and in paid employment, and contribute significantly to our social cohesion and community harmony.
17. ECCV calls on the Australian Government to undertake a comprehensive review of our refugee intake program, with a view to building a durable protection system in the region and delivering fair and adequate protection outcomes for all asylum seekers.