



# Edmund Rice Centre

## for Justice & Community Education

Awareness ♦ Advocacy ♦ Action

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**MEDIA RELEASE**

Sydney, Sunday, 9<sup>th</sup> October 2011

## **Prominent Australians – Statement on Asylum**

Embargoed release: until 11.00pm, Saturday, 8<sup>th</sup> October 2011

A group of prominent Australian individuals and institutions, reflecting a broad-ranging centre-ist perspective in the political spectrum, has signed an *Open Statement on Asylum Seekers*.

The *Open Statement* emphasises the need for an alternative policy direction in Australia's treatment of asylum seekers and outlines key elements of that new direction.

The Statement grew over the past month out of concern for the need within the national debate on asylum seeker policy, for alternatives to the off-shore processing positions of both major parties.

The Statement calls on the Prime-Minister and the Leader of the Opposition to abandon their separate plans for off-shore processing of asylum claims in favour of humanitarian policies similar to those enacted with bi-partisan support in the aftermath of the Vietnam War during the 1970's.

Signatories include former Prime-Minister Malcolm Fraser; eminent jurist Elizabeth Evatt; former Minister of Immigration in the Fraser Government, Ian Macphee; 2010 Australian of the Year Professor Patrick McGorry; 2011 Senior Australian of the Year Professor Ron McCallum; child psychiatry expert Professor Louise Newman; together with other leading academics, and human rights and legal experts.

National institutional signatories of the Statement include the Refugee Council, the Council for International Development, the Catholic and Uniting Churches, and the international development agency of the National Council of Churches.

The release of the Statement precedes the expected resumption in Federal Parliament this week of the debate on the Government's proposed legislative amendments aimed at removing the safeguards in the Migration Act that were recently ruled by the High Court to prohibit the off-shore processing of asylum seekers in Malaysia.

A spokesperson for the group called for other institutions and prominent Australians, together with the public in general, to register their support as co-signatories of the Statement by making direct contact or by visiting the websites of the signatory institutions.

For interview or comment contact:-

**Phil Glendenning: 0419 013 758 or Sean Cleary: 0403 434 512**

The text of the Statement with the full list of signatories is included with this release and may be accessed at:-

<http://www.erc.org.au/asylum>

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