



Beyond the Boats: building an asylum and refugee policy for the long term

Launch, 2pm, Parliament House, Canberra (Room 1R1)

Media Release

The report results from a high-level roundtable on asylum and refugee policy held at Parliament House in July under the auspices of the Centre for Policy Development, Australia21 and the Andrew & Renata Kaldor Centre for International Refugee Law at the University of New South Wales.

The acute phase of boat arrivals appears over. However, 'stopping the boats' is the start of the conversation, not the end of it. The report is not a comprehensive blueprint. History shows there are no 'magic bullets' or quick solutions. What the report does is demonstrate how we might move to a long-term framework for managing asylum and refugee policy that is realistic about means and ends.

Key recommendations include raising Australia's humanitarian intake, phasing out mandatory detention apart from initial screening and establishing a regional Track II dialogue.

The nine-point framework presented focuses on managing arrivals, conditions and treatment, and regional and community engagement. For immediate impact, the report recommends expanding pathways for humanitarian settlement, such as through the orderly departure arrangements, swift determination of claims and improved conditions including work rights. A regional Track II dialogue on forced migration is also proposed to help officials to look beyond electoral cycles.

The roundtable process got participants out of the trenches and identified some common ground. A diverse group of 35 policymakers and experts participated in the roundtable, including Liberal Party, ALP and Greens parliamentarians, former Indonesian Ambassador Wiryono Sastrohandoyo, Malaysian strategist Steven Wong, former UNHCR Assistant High Commissioner for Protection Erika Feller, former Immigration Minister the Hon Ian Macphie, former Chief of Defence Force Admiral Chris Barrie, Expert Panel on Asylum Seekers member Paris Aristotle and Australian Strategic Policy Institute analyst David Lang.

Labor Senator Sam Dastyari, who participated in the Roundtable and was born in Iran, said that the July Roundtable discussion: *"was a bold and innovative effort to re-start a mature discussion on asylum seekers; a discussion that must respect the broad views of Australians and the deeply divisive nature of the debate in order to progress. Both sides of this divide are only too willing to express their anger and outrage, but few are prepared to step into the breach to look for reasonable policy solutions."*

Greens MP, Adam Bandt who also took part in the Roundtable dialogue said: *"I commend the sponsoring groups for asking how we can approach asylum seeker and refugee policy sustainably in this country."*
"It's clear that we have the ideas to make Australian immigration policy something that we can be proud of. Now it's time for all political leaders to have the courage to implement fair policies that treat asylum seekers and refugees with the respect and compassion that they deserve."

The host of the launch, Liberal Federal Member for McMillan, Russel Broadbent, will be providing further commentary on the report and its recommendations at the launch.