

APPENDIX A

Joint Statement by Victorian Local Governments on Asylum Seekers *19 June 2014*

We the undersigned representatives of local government across Victoria issue the following statement:

We call on the Australian Government to abandon its harsh policies and practices in dealing with asylum seekers who arrive in Australia by boat, and restore Australia's international reputation and record on human rights.

In particular the Australian Government should:

- resume processing applications for asylum in Australia rather than off-shore
- abolish the policy of sending unaccompanied minors to off-shore processing centres and re-establishing more 'humane' approaches that reflect our duty to protect children and young people
- grant asylum seekers work rights to enable them to provide for themselves and their families
- abolish the temporary protection visa policy for people assessed as refugees, regardless of their method of arrival
- provide approved on-shore refugee applicants with full entitlements to settlement services
- end the practice of vilifying and demonising asylum seekers
- invest in a humanitarian community-based processing model for asylum seekers and provide necessary support mechanisms while awaiting outcome of applications
- process applications for asylum in a fair and timely manner to avoid the harm and trauma implications associated with prolonged status determination
- allow approved applicants access to timely and realistic family reunion
- stop referring to asylum seekers who arrive by boat as "illegal arrivals" or any other expression which suggests that they have broken the law by coming to Australia without a visa to seek asylum.

As local councils we respect and value the asylum seekers in our respective municipalities and their democratic right to participate in and contribute to the life of the community.

We recognise their human rights, struggle, resilience and determination to secure a safe and secure future for themselves and their families.

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We commit to welcoming asylum seekers into our community and give them fair access to our services

We strive to protect their health and wellbeing and advocate for their rights to be treated with respect and dignity

We recognise and value their skills, life experiences and contributions to the development and diversity of our cities and communities

This statement has been endorsed by:

(List of participating Mayors)