

CHECK OUT

CCJP

July 2013

Election 2013 – Policy Positions: The Asylum Seeker Issue

This is the 1st in a series of CCJP Check Outs on key Election Policy issues.



The Green Party Policy Positions:

- Greatly enhanced regional cooperation in the Asia-Pacific to provide safer pathways for asylum seekers, with long-term planning to accommodate people displaced by on-going conflicts and climate change.
- Asylum Seekers to be fully informed of their rights on arrival and given immediate access to legal assistance.
- Assessment of applications for asylum completed in a timely and transparent manner.
- The elimination of mandatory and/or indefinite detention and the abolition of offshore processing (where an asylum seeker or refugee is taken from Australian territory to another nation to be assessed) and other forms of punitive or discriminatory treatment of asylum seekers and refugees.
- All people categorised as refugees, but given negative security assessments by ASIO, to be given reasons for such assessment and the opportunity to challenge this in the appropriate forum.
- Asylum seekers to have work rights, and access to social security, legal representation, interpreters, health services, case management, and appropriate education for the duration of their assessment.
- Where an asylum seeker is not found to be owed protection, provision of fair and appropriate accommodation until they can be repatriated. Where a person is stateless, provision of accommodation in the community until they are issued with a visa or another durable solution is found.



More Information:

For more information on this and other issues visit www.ccjpoz.org

Labor Policy Positions:

Labor has stated that it will follow the recommendations of the Expert Panel including:

- Offshore processing and the expansion of facilities in PNG and Nauru.
- A 'no advantage' rule for those arriving by boat.
- Only return boats with full agreement of the Indonesian Government.
- An increase in resettlement numbers & humanitarian program.
- Possible community support program
- Changes to family reunion for people arriving by boat.
- Reopen talks with Malaysia - although unlikely after the High Court ruled the agreement is null and void owing to Malaysia's human rights issues.
- Introduce "more effective law enforcement" measures to crack down on the "vile trade" of people smuggling (Foreign Minister Bob Carr).
- Recent policy indications include tighter processing and assessing methods with narrower criteria to discourage 'economic migrants' including flying them back to country of origin or another country.
- People suspected of destroying documents will be sent to the back of the 'queue'.

Liberal Coalition Policy Positions:

- Reintroduce temporary protection visas.
- Boost use of offshore processing
- Turn back the boats when it is safe to do so and use special forces to handle these operations.
- Presumption against granting asylum if it is suspected that documents have been destroyed deliberately.
- Presumption against asylum seekers who come by boat for refugee status
- Sri Lankan Asylum Seekers automatically sent back – deemed to be economic refugees.
- Reverse refugee & Humanitarian visa numbers from 20,000 to 13,750
- No right of appeal.
- Offshore humanitarian visa holders to be given preference in obtaining permanent residency.
- Establishment of mandatory minimum jail sentences for people smugglers
- Refuse visas to asylum seekers who arrive by boat.
- Require asylum seekers receiving welfare benefits on bridging visas to work for the dole.

- In July Labor introduced a 'hardline' PNG policy sending all boat arrivals to PNG with 'no' future prospect of settlement in Australia.
- It also suspended the unit within the Refugee Review Tribunal which researches country conditions, making it harder for appeals to succeed.

Sources:

(Crikey.com, Centre for Policy Development, The Green Party's website)

N.B.: In some cases the Parties have only set out principles not specific policies & strategies. However it is possible to see some clear differences in some of the approaches on the issues.

Emails were sent to the Minister for Immigration and the Shadow Minister requesting their policy on Asylum Seekers, no response has been received from Labor or the Coalition.



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