

Newsletter

No.28 August, 2005

Blue Mountains Refugee Support Group

P.O. Box 197 KATOOMBA NSW 2780

e-mail: bmrsg@bigpond.net.au

website: www.bluemountainsrefugeesupport.net

A PROJECT OF THE BLUE MOUNTAINS FAMILY
SUPPORT SERVICE ABN 48 765 203 957

Ph 4751 2120 or 47827866

“I am only one, but I am one. I can’t do everything, but I can do something. I will do something.” Helen Keller

• Education • Direct Help • Direct Action • Fund Raising

Recent small changes would indicate that Helen Keller was right. We must keep the pressure on the politicians and the media to effect more change.

The Latest Government Changes to the Legislation re Refugees

This summary of the new legislation is from the latest Newsletter of the Refugee Council of Australia.

“On 17th June the Prime Minister announced a number of changes to the legislation and policy relating to immigration detention.

While Australia’s policy of mandatory, non-reviewable detention remains in place, the changes do address a number of the most significant problems of the detention system.

The greatest winners from the changes are families. Provision has been made for families with children to be “detained” in the community in the care of community-based agencies. This will enable families to function as a unit and to provide some semblance of a normal environment for their children.

The Minister for Immigration has also been given far greater discretionary powers to provide visas - including but not limited to the new Removal Pending Bridging Visas - to other detainees.

*Other changes in the package include:
the introduction of time limits on the processing of protection visas;
granting the Commonwealth Ombudsman a formal oversight role in relation to the cases of people who have been in detention for more than two years;
rapid processing of outstanding permanent protection visa applications from TPV holders; and
the establishment of a high level Interdepartmental Committee to oversee the implementation of these changes.*

What These Changes Mean

True, all children and their families were out of detention by Friday 29th July.

In order to comply with the 29 July deadline DIMIA was forced to pay for everything - rent, living allowance and medical expenses and the wages of a Case Manager.

The Non Government Organisations - Red Cross, St Vincent de Paul et alia requested another week to set up more suitable accommodation for the released refugee families. DIMIA refused. The seven families released from Villawood went to temporary accommodation in very expensive serviced apartments all expenses paid.

The TV news showed the children basking poolside in the sun and one woman ecstatic over the fact that her apartment had two toilets!!! Reality will bite when they are moved to less opulent accommodation.

Most of those released are non-compliant cases: Tongans, Fijians, Taiwanese, very few are Asylum Seekers

Technically, they remain in detention ie. they have not been issued with a visa but remain in community detention. Adults are not allowed to work.

This will continue until their legal avenues are exhausted which for most, will mean deportation.

Finally. and here is the clincher . Families already released on Bridging E visas, having paid bonds of up to \$20,000 still have no access to any services - no medicare, no work rights, no Centrelink - nothing. Many of these have strong cases for Asylum and should be allowed to work at least. Their children should be allowed to attend school.

Education

2 November, 2005 2.00pm
Playback Theatre & Dr Louise Newman
Wentworth Falls School of Arts,
Playback will perform the stories of two refugees from Holroyd High School. Dr Louise Newman will be the keynote speaker.

Direct Help

Villawood Visitors report that many of the friends they have been visiting have been removed to Baxter or released on Removal Pending Bridging Visas. This is not all good news, Contact Judy on 4758 6228 or Leoni on 47651 4739 for details .

Our families

Fatima has had her baby - a boy. As it was born premature, both she and the baby are still in need of care. Recently, the baby has been moved from Nepean to Katoomba Hospital

Direct Action

Tampa Day Rally Friday August 26, 5.30pm
Sydney Town Hall Marching to Circular Quay
Organised by RAC and Labor for Refugees .

Fundraising

August 20 -Old Fashioned Bush Dance

The Gang Gang Band will play and the Trade Union Choir will sing during interval

Wanted Jams, pickles, biscuits or other items (not necessarily food) for the stall at the Bush Dance 20 August. You can deliver to: George - 7 Mission St Katoomba - 4782 7866, Jim Fitzpatrick - 19 Ravine Ave Blaxland - 4739 2450, Joy Connor - 67 Rawson Pde Leura - 4784 1819, Marie Standen - 31 Wigram Rd Faulconbridge - 4751 2120 , Peggy Goldsmith - 8 Taylor St ,Woodford - 4758 8104.

Fine food Dinner 8 October 7.00pm

Treahorne Restaurant, 175 Katoomba Street., Katoomba.

\$60 per head, \$35 to BMRSG
tax deductible.

Reservations George 4782 7866
by October 1st.

Prepared by M. Standen for BMRSG