



## MEDIA RELEASE

(For Immediate Release)

CASE for Refugees

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### **No legal advice for Chinese asylum seekers**

CASE for Refugees Principal Solicitor, Shayla Strapps, has highlighted concerns about the Department of Immigration refusing to provide the Chinese asylum seekers with appropriate independent legal advice in relation to whether they should claim asylum in Australia.

Without having had the benefit of appropriate legal advice, the asylum seekers (including two children) had their visas cancelled and have been placed in detention.

Ms Strapps says that she personally asked the Department on two occasions to provide the asylum seekers with appropriate independent legal advice and indicated that if they were unable to find that advice locally then, as a migration solicitor, she was happy to provide it.

*Ms Strapps says: "I told the Department that I was available and could provide the advice. I also asked them if the lawyer who was present in Darwin was a migration agent and was experienced in providing this sort of advice. I said that it was very important that they receive advice from an appropriately qualified person before making any decisions or from talking again to any immigration officials"*

CASE understands that one of the asylum seekers had requested a particular lawyer. However, this lawyer was not a migration agent and therefore unable to provide legal advice on migration matters. The Department was specifically told this by Ms Strapps and despite Ms Strapps being on the phone and available to provide appropriate legal advice, she was told that no assistance was required.

CASE for Refugees says that it is imperative for everyone, including asylum seekers to be given the opportunity to access appropriate legal advice before being railroaded into a decision by the Department of Immigration. Ms Strapps says, *"How can these asylum seekers have made an independent decision about exercising their rights in this country when they weren't given independent legal advice about what those rights were? They don't know the legal system here. It is not the job of the Department to provide them with advice about their claims – that must be done independently and ensuring that independence is a cornerstone of a fair and robust legal system."*

### **About CASE for Refugees**

CASE for Refugees is Western Australia's only Community Legal Centre providing legal services to refugees, asylum seekers and Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CaLD) communities. Operating since 2002, CASE has assisted thousands of clients from over 36 countries many of whom have been victims of torture and trauma.

In 2011, CASE's Principle Solicitors, Amanda Goodier and Shayla Strapps were awarded the prestigious WA Law Society's Lawyers of the Year Award in recognition of their work and service.