



MEDIA RELEASE
(for immediate release)

Serious concern at Coalition's removal of legal assistance to refugees policy

CASE for Refugees is concerned about today's announcement from the coalition regarding a proposed asylum seeker processing regime which scraps legal advice to asylum seekers.

CASE for Refugees Chief Executive Officer, Shayla Strapps, says that the proposed policy is another clear attempt to try to avoid a proper and robust processing system.

"What we are talking about here is a removal of the ability of people to access legal advice for their refugee claims. We are talking about people who do not speak English and have no understanding of the Australian legal system. Our clients are often survivors of torture and trauma, have limited English and many are unable to read or write in their own language, let alone English. How can they know how to make well articulated claims?"

Legal advisers facilitate the Department's decision making process by presenting clear, well articulated claims on their clients' behalf. Legal advisers ensure that vulnerable people, who may have been mistreated by authorities in their own country, are supported through a confronting process. Legal advisers are protectors of human rights, they ensure that due process is followed.

"CASE is a recipient of some of this funding, but it is not CASE that we are worried about, it is our clients. CASE has worked for the last 10 years to provide free legal assistance to clients and the bulk of this has been provided pro bono and through volunteers who have given their time and expertise. We do this work because we know that a proper due process is a key part of any properly functioning democracy."

"Why do we think that people who are fleeing persecution deserve any less than an opportunity to be heard in a fair way?"

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 50 countries many of whom have been victims of torture and trauma.

In 2011, CASE's CEO Shayla Strapps was awarded the WA Law Society's Lawyer of the Year Award in recognition of her work and service.

Further info: admin@caseforrefugees.org.au