**Work Rights**

**To:** Clare.ONeil.MP@aph.gov.au
**Cc:** Giles, Andrew (MP) <Andrew.Giles.MP@aph.gov.au>
**Subject:** **Work Rights**

Dear Minister,

It is with some urgency that we write to you about work rights for asylum seekers and refugees and especially now, as the very important Jobs and Skills Summit is to take place.

**No consistent category**:

It is essential that all asylum seekers living in Australia be given work rights.  To not have them means these people are living a desperate existence depending on charities and church groups to stay alive.  A major problem is that there seems to be no consistent category as to who will receive work rights.  There are applicants in similar categories, but some are given work rights and others do not.

**No Visa at all**:

There are approximately 2000 asylum seekers in the community who have no Visa at all.  Here at BASP we help several of these men.

**Need for a programme to help mentally damaged asylum seekers**:

Asylum seekers kept in detention for long periods are inevitably almost always damaged mentally and often physically.   These people, who have sacrificed everything to build a life in Australia, need a specific programme that would help them to gradually transition into employment.  This would be money well spent with long term benefits for the individual and our country.

As a group working daily with asylum seekers and their difficulties we find the existence, or not, of work rights to be of fundamental importance to their well-being.

Yours sincerely,

**----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------**

**To:** Minister Brendan O'Connor: <brendan.oconnor@aph.gov.au>
**Subject:** **Work Rights**

Dear Minister,

The air waves and printed press are highlighting the call to increase the number of skilled immigrants and general workers to enter Australia.  This call is coming from many quarters: the agricultural, construction and IT employers to mention some.  It is being endorsed to a certain extent by the Australian Union movement.  We suggest that Work Rights be given to all asylum seekers and refugees living in Australia.  These comprise a cohort of people who want to work and eventually be able to settle in this country.  That is why they have faced enormous obstacles to come here.  Many of these are skilled workers but all, who are physically capable, desire to work.

We urgently ask that you undertake this action.  It would mean people living in the community on charity, or a meagre income, would have their needs addressed and Australian employers also benefit.

Yours sincerely,

**----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------**

**Offshore Processing Proposal**

**To:** Minister Clare O'Neill: <clare.oneill@aph.gov.au>
**Cc:** Minister Giles: <andrew.giles@aph.gov.au>
**Subject:** : Proposed New Contract for Offshore Processing

Dear Minister,

It is with great disappointment and shock that we read in The Guardian about a proposed new contract for offshore processing of asylum seekers and refugees.  It is not only the worrying reputation of the proposed contractor but that the present Government should even be thinking of wasting money on this operation.

The present policy of processing asylum seekers and refugees in an offshore facility has been the source of tremendous harm to those interned.  Nauru is not under Australian control and the landscape, climate and facilities are the cause of well documented suffering to those held there in detention.  It is de facto a detention centre and has been routinely condemned by UN inspectors and a host of human rights organizations.  It would indicate a government’s dissociation from the barbarous treatment that has been meted out to innocent people if it took steps to immediately close this enterprise.

The present cost is estimated at currently half a billion per year, a totally unnecessary expense.  No new asylum seeker arrivals have been sent to Nauru since 2014 and one wonders why a new contract for five years is being contemplated.  Of course, the Opposition will claim that a message would be given to “people smugglers” to commence their operations again but surely it is time for this shibboleth to be faced down.  Boats are still coming to Australia and our Border Force is dealing with them.

One wonders why we persist in employing private prison companies to process innocent asylum seekers to this country.  Neither the present recipients of the Australian contract nor the proposed US based private prisons operator have reputations that bear scrutiny, exactly the opposite.  We urgently ask that this present Government continue to exhibit adherence to UN Charter principles and treat asylum seeker applicants with genuine respect and process them humanely within Australia.

Yours sincerely,