

## Media release

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### Australia - an Exclusive Club Not for Refugees

Scott Morrison's remarks yesterday continue to reveal the Abbott government's ongoing violation of the Convention on the Status of Refugees, Nathan Kennedy, President of ALHR said today.

'Minister Morrison continues to paint asylum seekers as economic migrants looking for a better life despite the overwhelming majority of those coming by boat being recognised as refugees. He suggests that not only "a club of first world economies" should offer resettlement to refugees despite the obvious fact that these economies are the best placed to provide support for refugees' said Mr Kennedy. 'Further, the new plan excludes Australia entirely. The only countries included in Mr Morrison's new 'resettlement club' are Nauru, Papua New Guinea and Cambodia. This is not sharing resettlement obligations with other signatory countries; this is obligation shifting to poorer nations.'

'Even those people recognised as refugees by these countries will not be able to enter Australia. Mr Morrison should stop pretending that the government's policy is about compliance with the Refugee Convention when Australia's laws are specifically designed to avoid our obligations and reduce any incentive for an asylum seeker to come to Australia' said Mr Kennedy. 'If someone requests Australia for asylum it is for Australia to determine the person's refugee status. If a refugee is transferred to a third country it is Australia's obligation to ensure that the third country can provide effective protection. Given that the government has specifically chosen certain countries that it considers will pose a disincentive to asylum seekers the logical conclusion is that these countries cannot provide that protection.'

'The Refugee Convention is more than simply finding a person a place where they will be free of persecution' Mr Kennedy explained. 'A refugee has a special status in international law, entitled to the rights provided for under the Convention and protection of their human rights. There are about 12 million refugees and asylum seekers in the world. Nine out of the top ten refugee hosting countries are developing nations and account for over 50% of the world's refugees. The fact is, hardly any refugees make it to our shores. As one of the wealthiest nations in the world Australia has the capacity to offer resettlement to those that do and as one of the nations that drafted the Refugee Convention and ratified it, we have a legal obligation to do so.'

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ALHR (Australian Lawyers for Human Rights) is a network of Australian lawyers active in practising and promoting awareness of international human rights standards in Australia. ALHR has a national membership of over 3000 people, with active National, State and Territory committees.