



# Refugee Council on community-based alternatives to immigration detention

The Refugee Council of Australia will give evidence to the Migration Committee tomorrow (Wednesday 4 February) as part of the Committee's ongoing inquiry into immigration detention and alternatives.

After tabling its first inquiry report in December, the Committee is now considering community-based alternatives to immigration detention.

"We will be looking at the options currently available in Australia, how they are working, what other countries are doing, and whether there are other things that could work in the Australian context," said Chair Michael Danby.

In their submission to the inquiry, the Refugee Council of Australia is supportive of the Government's stated intention to release a greater number of people into the community while they await the outcome of their visa application.

"In the great majority of cases," the submission states, "community-based care arrangements are more conducive than detention to assisting in resolving a person's visa status", as well as providing more appropriate arrangement for people with torture and trauma backgrounds and complex needs.

It argues, however, that more needs to be done to resource and develop models of community care in collaboration with asylum seeker service providers, asylum seekers, UNHCR and the International Organisation for Migration.

The Council also suggests that where people are able to work, they should be granted a bridging visa with work rights.

Many asylum seekers living in the community on bridging visas do not have the right to work or access to Medicare and Centrelink benefits.

"The Council and its members have expressed concern on many occasions about the situation of many asylum seekers living in the community who are not permitted to work and have no access to basic health services," the submission states.

"It is important, as the Australian Government moves to expand community-based alternatives to detention, that steps are taken to ensure that people are not left destitute while their visa status is determined."

**Wednesday 4 February - 12:30pm - Committee Room 1R3, Parliament House, Canberra**

**For media comment**, please contact the Committee Chair, Michael Danby MP, on (02) 6277 4520.

**For background information** please visit the inquiry website at [www.aph.gov.au/mig](http://www.aph.gov.au/mig) or contact the Committee Secretariat on (02) 6277 4560 or [jscm@aph.gov.au](mailto:jscm@aph.gov.au)