



A safe haven for the vulnerable? Humanitarian migration and disability

On Wednesday 10 March 2010 the Joint Standing Committee on Migration will hear from the Refugee Council of Australia (RCOA), a non-government umbrella body assisting refugees and asylums seekers with over 130 member organisations.

Before coming to Australia humanitarian visa applicants may have experienced extremes of social dislocation, persecution and displacement for long periods. Resettlement provides a safe haven for those affected, with the hope of eventual reunification with their families and a productive future.

Migration Committee Chair Michael Danby stated: 'Australia supports family reunification through a range of humanitarian visas, many of which allow for a health waiver or an exemption from the migration health requirement. Even so, the Committee has heard that some refugees disabled in war or conflict, may fail to get a visa under the migration health requirement'.

The Refugee Council of Australia maintains that Australia will be enriched by taking a more compassionate approach to humanitarian visa applicants. It cites research indicating significant long term economic contributions are made by resettled refugees, who are more entrepreneurial than the general population. This is despite barriers such as discrimination and trauma.

Mr Danby said: 'It is in Australia's best interests to support a process that gives our most vulnerable migrants the best chance for successful resettlement. A less compassionate approach may have long term negative effects on a refugee family's capacity to adjust, and so to become productive in our community.'

Public hearing

Committee Room 1S5 —Parliament House 11.00am to 11.45am

**Refugee Council of Australia
Mr Paul Power, Chief Executive Officer**

Please note the meeting is located in a Senate Committee room.

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

For more information and the inquiry terms of reference, visit the inquiry website at www.aph.gov.au/house/committee/mig/disability/index.htm or contact the Committee Secretariat on (02) 6277 4560 or jscm@aph.gov.au.

Screen reader accessible copy of the Hansard record will be available from the Committee Secretariat within three to five days of the meeting.