



# *media release*

*Australian Council for International Development*

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## **Border Control Focus Not a Durable Solution, says Overseas Aid Peak**

Neither the Government nor Opposition parties have addressed the substance of the asylum-seeker issue in recent policy announcements, says the Australian Council for International Development (ACFID), peak body for Australian overseas development agencies.

"Political leaders in Australia need to lift their eyes above the horizon on asylum issues", said Marc Purcell, ACFID Executive Director. "What the Australian Government does in domestic immigration policy regarding asylum-seekers can undermine not only what it is trying to achieve in the region through development assistance and peace building, but also undo the work of ACFID members. In the past, high levels of aid money channelled through Nauru distorted the focus of Australia's official development assistance program."

"The real measure of success for Australia's asylum policy should be how effective we are in helping to prevent the root causes of forced displacement and in assisting refugees trapped in long-term camps, not stopping people smugglers. The focus on deterring people smugglers distracts us from the stories of boatloads of vulnerable people fleeing conflict and persecution."

"Australia could instead focus on improving and expanding what it is already doing to promote peace, human rights and the prevention of conflict, as well as removing obstacles to return."

"Treating individual asylum-seekers who come under Australia's international protection obligations with dignity and according to international law should be the other criteria of success."

"Being focused on solutions would mean addressing the fact that a large proportion of the world's refugees and internally displaced persons remain displaced for a very long time. Despite wanting to return home, there is often no end in sight to the violence and persecution that forced them to flee. Many, like Afghan refugees in Pakistan and internally displaced persons in Sri Lanka, live in sub-standard conditions in camps for decades while conflict ebbs and wanes. Some studies suggest that the average length of time a refugee waits in a camp is 17 years. People living in camps are often deprived of basic human rights such as the opportunity to earn a living, gain an education, or to move freely."

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The Australian Council for International Development is an independent national association of Australian non-government organisations (NGOs) working in the field of international aid and development.

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