

**ORDINARY MEETING OF COUNCIL
18 DECEMBER 2006**

SUPPLEMENTARY REPORT

A1	UPDATE ON THE CURRENT STRATEGY FOR REFUGEES AND ASYLUM SEEKERS IN PORT PHILLIP
LOCATION/ADDRESS:	N/A
RESPONSIBLE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR:	SALLY CALDER, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, COMMUNITY AND CULTURAL VITALITY
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FILE NO.:	80/01/21
ATTACHMENTS:	N/A

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1. This report presents an updated public statement on refugees and asylum seekers as requested by Council at the Strategy & Policy Review Committee meeting on 4 December 2006.
- 1.2. It recommends that Council:
 - 1.2.1. Endorse the revised the public statement on refugees and asylum seekers; and
 - 1.2.2. Continue to endorse the current strategies in place to support refugees and asylum seekers.

2. BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

- 2.1. A supplementary report was requested by Council to include a prelude to the public statement on asylum seekers and refugees.
 - 2.1.1. The revised public statement states:

For many former refugees, both local and since spread further afield, Station Pier, Port Melbourne and now the City of Port Phillip is particularly special as the point of arrival. Our City is where many experienced their first sights, sounds and smells of their new country, their new home.

The City of Port Phillip acknowledges and celebrates the long term presence and great contributions of many who arrived as refugees, to our city's social and cultural vitality, its economic strength, and its physical character and beauty.

The City of Port Phillip believes that all people should be able to live their lives free from oppression and abuse. We assert that the current treatment of asylum seekers and particularly their mandatory detention is unjust and inhumane, compounding the trauma that most individuals in this situation have experienced. All people have the right to seek asylum and should have the opportunity to have their claims heard fairly.

We are committed to engaging with local citizens and groups, including multicultural, interfaith, community health and support agencies, to determine how this community can support asylum seekers. Our goal is to work in partnership with asylum-seekers to empower them and foster their independence as well as celebrating the contribution of asylum-seekers and refugees to our community.

2.1.2. The statement now reflects the diversity of refugees and asylum seekers arriving in the City of Port Phillip. It picks up on the wave of post World War II refugees arriving at Station Pier as well as acknowledging newer refugees and asylum seekers.

2.1.3. The statement now includes a prelude that celebrates the positive contribution of refugees and asylum seekers to the City of Port Phillip.

2.1.4. The statement has also been up-dated to assert Council's viewpoint on the rights of asylum seekers and refugees.

3. SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION

A prelude to the current public statement on asylum seekers and refugees was developed to celebrate the positive contributions that asylum seekers and refugees have in the past and continue to bring to the City of Port Phillip.

4. RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that Council resolve to:

- 4.1. Endorse a revised public statement on asylum seekers and refugees that states:

For many former refugees, both local and since spread further afield, Station Pier, Port Melbourne and now the City of Port Phillip is particularly special, as the point of arrival. Our City is where many experienced their first sights, sounds and smells of their new country, their new home.

The City of Port Phillip acknowledges and celebrates the long term presence and great contributions of many who arrived as refugees, to our city's social and cultural vitality, its economic strength and its physical character and beauty.

The City of Port Phillip believes that all people should be able to live their lives free from oppression and abuse. We assert that the current treatment of asylum seekers and particularly their mandatory detention is unjust and inhumane, compounding the trauma that most individuals in this situation have experienced. All people have the right to seek asylum and should have the opportunity to have their claims heard fairly.

We are committed to engaging with local citizens and groups, including multicultural, interfaith, community health and support agencies, to determine how this community can support asylum seekers. Our goal is to work in partnership with asylum-seekers to empower them and foster their independence as well as celebrating the contribution of asylum-seekers and refugees to our community.

- 4.2. Support the continuance of the current strategy that was established in May 2002 with minimal changes as outlined below:
- 4.2.1. Council continue to engage in discussion with citizens and local groups, including multicultural, interfaith, community health and support agencies, to determine an appropriate community response.
 - 4.2.2. Annual Harmony Day events are organized with consultation with the refugee and asylum seeker community to ensure their input into the event.
 - 4.2.3. Information on asylum seekers regularly up-dated and continue to be provided on the City of Port Phillip website and in ASSIST centers and libraries.
 - 4.2.4. Information on the ways people can become involved in supporting asylum seekers through other organizations to be readily available on the website and elsewhere in council publications.
 - 4.2.5. The service agreement with the South Central Region Migrant Resource Centre to be reviewed to ensure that the needs of refugees and asylum seekers are being met within the City of Port Phillip.
 - 4.2.6. Council continue to advocate for and support programs that celebrate diversity.
- 4.3. The current strategies in place have proven to be effective tools in interaction with our refugee and asylum seeker community. This should be continued to ensure that a positive relationship is maintained.

Council's current approach remains effective and supportive in delivering council's aims and follows the structure of the Multicultural Plan Strategic Framework.

Since these strategies were implemented, there have been no major changes to the political environment nor changes to any government policy that would warrant a review of our current strategies.