



The Coalition's Policy to Withdraw Taxpayer Funded Assistance to Illegal Boat Arrivals

August 2013

Key Points

The Coalition will restore integrity to our borders.

The result of Labor's approach has been chaos, cost and tragedy. More than 50,000 illegal arrivals by boat, \$11.6 billion in cost blowouts and more than 1,000 people dead.

We have already announced a broad suite of measures through Operation Sovereign Borders and our policy to clear Labor's border failure backlog of more than 30,000 cases of people who have already arrived illegally by boat under Labor and have not been processed.

To complement our already announced border protection policies, we will withdraw taxpayer funded immigration assistance under the Immigration Advice and Application Assistance Scheme (IAAAS) for those who arrive illegally by boat, or illegally any other method, to prepare asylum claims and make appeals.

The IAAAS provides expert, independent immigration assistance, free of charge, to people seeking Australia's protection. The IAAAS is available to people who arrived by boat without a visa, whether located in an immigration detention facility, community detention or granted a bridging visa. It is provided by registered migration agents, including lawyers, or people qualified to give immigration advice.

If people choose to violate how Australia chooses to run our refugee and humanitarian programme, they should not presume upon the support and assistance that is provided to those who seek to come the right way, and they should certainly not receive additional assistance, as they do now.

With more than 30,000 people left in Labor's queue, a Coalition government is not going to keep the taxpayer funded immigration advice tab open. Our obligations do not extend to free immigration advice and assistance.



Introduction

The Scale of the Problem Caused by Labor

Labor has failed on our borders like no other government in Australia's history.

Illegal arrivals by boat to Australia have increased from an average of just two people per month in the last five years of the former Coalition government to the current rate of more than 3,000 people per month.

The number of people in the immigration detention network or on bridging visas in the community who have arrived illegally by boat has increased from just four people in 2007 to more than 30,000 today.

More than 1,000 people have perished at sea after people smugglers' boats sank.

More than 6,000 children have had their lives put at risk by travelling on people smugglers' boats to Australia.

More than 14,500 desperate people have been denied a place under our offshore humanitarian programme because those places have been taken by people who have arrived illegally by boat. These people are genuine refugees, already processed by United Nations agencies, but they are denied a chance at resettlement by people who have money in their pocket to buy a place via people smugglers.

The annual cost to Australian taxpayers for managing illegal boat arrivals has increased from \$85 million in 2007-08 to over \$3 billion in 2013-14.

Between 2007-08 and 2013-14, the budget for managing illegal boat arrivals has blown-out by \$11.6 billion.

This is real money that could have been spent on Australian schools, hospitals or improving our infrastructure.

Labor's border failure is the consequence of Labor's failed policies and failed resolve.

Labor weakened Australia's borders by abolishing the proven border protection policy regime established by the Howard Government and has provided an open invitation to people smugglers throughout their six years in office.

Since 2007, Labor has pursued 11 failed approaches to border protection.

All of Labor's policies have failed.

Labor has consistently demonstrated that they have neither the resolve nor the competence to combat people smuggling.



The 'Immigration Advice and Application Assistance Scheme'

The hallmark of the Coalition's approach to border protection has been our steadfast consistency over more than a decade.

To be consistent, you cannot have one rule for some and not for others. That is why a Coalition government will apply equally our measures across all those who seek to come to Australia the wrong way - whether they attempt it in the future, or they are one of more than 30,000 people who are already here and Labor have not processed.

This approach sends the clearest possible message about our resolve.

To maintain the integrity of our refugee and humanitarian program only those who seek to come Australia the right way will be extended the full suite of protections that Australia is prepared to provide.

Labor has a different view. On the other side of the election Labor will grant permanent visas with full family reunion rights and a pathway to citizenship to in excess of 30,000 people who have already arrived illegally by boat. Each one of those visas will take the place of someone waiting in more desperate circumstances off shore.

Labor will give the benefit of the doubt in the assessment process to those who have thrown their documents away, will provide taxpayer funded advice and assistance under the Immigration Advice and Application Assistance Scheme (IAAAS) to make claims and to appeal negative decisions and will continue to provide hard wired access to our courts through the Refugee Review Tribunal.

More than 90 per cent of illegal arrivals can expect to get visas under Labor and 80 per cent can expect to have negative decisions overturned in Labor's 'tick and flick' assessment process.

The IAAAS provides expert, independent immigration assistance, free of charge, to people seeking Australia's protection. The IAAAS is available to people who arrived by boat without a visa, whether located in an immigration detention facility, community detention or granted a bridging visa. It is provided by registered migration agents, including lawyers, or people qualified to give immigration advice with interpreter support if needed. Their role is to help the asylum seeker prepare their protection claim, liaise with the department as the claim is being assessed and assist in preparing appeals of negative decisions to the Refugee Review Tribunal.

A budget of over \$42 million is available in 2013-14 under IAAAS for illegal boat arrivals whilst just \$3 million is set aside for people arriving in Australia legally with visas.

People coming to Australia legally on a visa have to pay to be provided with services from a migration agent and also have to pay visa charges.



The Plan

The Coalition has already announced an overhaul of Labor's 'tick and flick' assessment process for people making asylum claims who have arrived illegally by boat as part of our policy to clear Labor's 30,000 border failure backlog, comprising the following measures:

- restoration and application of temporary protection visas, denying permanent residency in Australia;
- a fairer system for people waiting offshore by quarantining the refugee and humanitarian intake from those arriving illegally by boat;
- removing the benefit of the doubt and denying refugee status for those who throw their documents away; and
- ending Labor's tick and flick assessment process.

The Coalition will add to this plan by withdrawing taxpayer funded immigration assistance under IAAAS for those who arrive illegally by boat, or illegally by any other method, to prepare asylum claims and make appeals.

If people choose to violate how Australia chooses to run our refugee and humanitarian programme, they should not presume upon the support and assistance that is provided to those who seek to come the right way, and they should certainly not receive additional assistance, as they do now.

With more than 30,000 people left in Labor's queue, a Coalition government is not going to keep the taxpayer funded immigration advice tab open.

Our obligations do not extend to free immigration advice and assistance.

The Coalition will provide clear instructions in multiple languages setting out the application and assessment process and will provide interpreters and DIAC staff, separate from those making the assessments, to answer any questions about the process. This is similar to the process employed by the UNHCR around the world.

Access to private and/or pro bono immigration advice will be facilitated by DIAC, with all costs to be met by the providers of these services, including costs incurred by DIAC.

The Coalition will also seek to mirror these arrangements in offshore processing jurisdictions, through discussions with our regional partners conducting the assessments in these countries.



The Choice

The choice is between an Australia under Labor which would continue to be a soft touch for the people smugglers and a Coalition government that will take the tough decisions to restore Australians' confidence that those who we accept as refugees are genuine.

Labor has failed on our borders like no other government in Australia's history.

Illegal arrivals by boat to Australia have increased from an average of just two people per month under the Howard Government to the current rate of more than 4,000 people per month.

Since Kevin Rudd abolished the Howard Government's strong and highly effective border control regime, more than 50,000 people have illegally entered Australia by boat.

The number of people in the immigration detention network or on bridging visas in the community who have arrived illegally by boat has increased from just four people in 2007 to almost 30,000 today.

More than 1,000 people have perished at sea after people smugglers' boats sank.

More than 6,000 children have had their lives put at risk by travelling on people smugglers' boats to Australia.

Labor weakened Australia's borders by abolishing the proven border protection policy regime established by the Howard Government and has provided an open invitation to people smugglers throughout their six years in office.

Tony Abbott has declared that "we're in charge of this country and we will decide who comes here." This is a statement of national sovereignty and the need for Australia to control our borders.

A Coalition government will restore effective policies that live up to this declaration.

To do otherwise puts people's lives at risk, disregards the safety and morale of our border protection forces, shows contempt for taxpayer money and effectively sells-out our immigration regime to the people smugglers.

Australians deserve a government that will take control of our borders and restore faith in our immigration system, including our generous humanitarian intake.

The Coalition will implement our approach to send the clearest possible message that not only has there been a change of policy, but a change of resolve.



Cost

The Coalition's *Policy to Withdraw Taxpayer Funded Assistance to Illegal Boat Arrivals* will produce savings of \$100 million to the Budget.

The Pre-Election Economic and Fiscal Outlook estimates that, even relative to assumptions for the pace of illegal arrivals that appear highly optimistic on current trends, savings of over \$1 billion would be realised by a faster than anticipated near-term decline to the long-term average pace of 370 per month. This measure will also add further to these savings.

The Coalition anticipates that new boat arrivals will substantially reduce well below current projections as a result of the implementation of the full suite of the Coalition's border protection policies. Under the Howard Government boat arrivals reduced to an average of just two people per month.



Hope.
Reward.
Opportunity.



THE NATIONALS *for Regional Australia*

For further details of the Coalition's Plan go to
www.realsolutions.org.au