



THE TASMANIA OPPORTUNITY:

Statewide Leaders Summit Proceedings - November 10, 2014

A TRIPLE BENEFIT PROPOSAL FOR TASMANIA, AUSTRALIA AND PEOPLE SEEKING PROTECTION AS REFUGEES



Speakers

Julian Burnside AO, QC;

Damon Thomas, Lord Mayor of Hobart;

Hung Nguyen FRACS, eminent Tasmanian surgeon;

Misha Coleman, EO, Australian Churches Refugee Taskforce.

Foreword

These proceedings bring together the discussions, input and deliberations of The Tasmania Opportunity Statewide Leaders Summit that was held in Launceston on Monday 10th November 2014. The Tasmania Opportunity has been convened by a group of Tasmanians who share concern with respect to the current policies and practices related to off-shore processing of asylum seekers and a vision for how a new and better framework could bring unprecedented economic and social benefits to Tasmania and Australia.

The Summit brought together over seventy Tasmanian leaders from political, business, community and religious organisations. For a full list of participants see Appendix 1. The key purpose of the Summit was to catalyse a cohesive and proactive process in which Tasmanian agencies and communities have input into the development of a framework for a smarter, less costly and more humane approach to support people seeking asylum in Australia.

The level of interest in the Tasmanian Leaders Summit and the cross-sectorial representation achieved reflect growing community concern about the policies, practices and outcomes with regard to off-shore processing of those seeking asylum in Australia. This concern is leading to a growing conversation and rethinking at federal, state and local levels. It is becoming evident that, across all community sectors there is a view that the current practice of off-shore incarceration is out of character with Australia's traditionally generous and accepting spirit, and that widespread division has been generated as conditions within off-shore processing facilities have become more widely publicised. As a result there is an urgency to find acceptable humane solutions to Australia's internal crisis of conflict over this issue, which if not remedied soon, could have significant costs in terms of public attitudes and social stability.

The Summit listened to presentations by speakers who provided insight into both local and national perceptions of the current situation. Former Lord Mayor of Hobart, Mr Damon Thomas, provided his personal insight into the issue through the eyes of a prominent Tasmanian, Ms Misha Coleman, Executive Officer Australian Churches Refugee Taskforce spoke of the high cost to the Australian tax system under current policy and practice and the incongruity of this cost when related to the resulting devastating humanitarian outcomes being perpetrated. Dr Hung Nguyen provided a moving narrative of his family's escape from harm, boat trip, asylum application, arrival in Australia and the advantages to all when this journey is met with a successful outcome. The principal speaker Julian Burnside QC, provided well-evidenced reasons why a change to a more humane and less costly on-shore processing option will result in significant and long lasting benefits for Australia and Tasmania.

The Summit then undertook a set of concurrent round table discussions across twenty topics designed to unlock the intellectual and experiential potential of those participating.

These topics were:

1. *International & Regional Responsibilities and Strategies*
2. *Detention and Current Detainees: Transitioning from an Out-of-date Model*
3. *Regional Economics: Saving and Redirecting Billions of Dollars*
4. *Sociological Benefits to Tasmania*
5. *Economic Benefits to Tasmania*
6. *Caring for New Arrivals – Humanitarian and Human Resource Components*
7. *Caring for New Arrivals – Logistics and Facilities*
8. *Moving toward Constructive and Unifying Politics*
9. *Capacity Building and Employment*
10. *Refugee Settlement*
11. *Transitioning Successfully from offshore to Tasmanian Processing*
12. *Logistics of Tasmanian Arrivals: Enhancing Tasmania’s Services Sector*
13. *Engendering a State of Welcome and Safe Open Communities*
14. *Spiritual Responses: Contribution of Churches and Religious Organisations*
15. *Mobilising and Utilising Volunteer Organisations*
16. *Valuing New Arrivals (Recognising and optimising hidden skills and abilities)*
17. *Cultural Celebration: A Spirit of Harmony in the midst of Increasing Diversity*
18. *Young Champions: Involving Tasmania’s Youth*
19. *Healthy Bodies and Minds: Transforming Tasmanian Health and Education*
20. *Enhancing Community Understanding and Support: Promotions and Media*

Proceedings were transcribed without identifying individual speakers. There was no attempt to reach conclusions or specific recommendations with regard to each topic.

The following resolution was put to Summit participants and over half (37 participants) of those attending have so far signed the resolution:

We resolve, as the participants and contacts of The Tasmania Opportunity Statewide Leaders Summit, having commenced the process of uniting our collective leadership experience, to progress the work started today to create a more compassionate, just, legal and fiscally responsible strategy toward those seeking Australia’s protection from harm.

We will collaborate with other leaders and our communities, to motivate and encourage our political leaders of all persuasions to facilitate the development of a proposal that advances Tasmania as the nation’s leader in safe, humane & dignified processing of people seeking asylum in Australia, which with adequate federal funding, can result in a vibrant and prosperous Tasmania.

These proceedings capture the input and discussions from the Summit and at times also draw on other relevant sources of evidence to contextualise discussions.

Executive Summary

There are around 33,500 asylum seekers in Australia and more than 2300 in Nauru and PNG whom may be in need of international protection and without a durable solution¹. An overwhelming message from the Summit was that a better way needs to be found, a way that significantly improves the experiences of those arriving in Australia seeking asylum and in addition could free up billions of Australian tax-payers' dollars.

The general tenet of discussion suggested that on-shore processing is by far the more preferable option to current practices or proposed off-shore processing options. Caring and humane on-shore processing in Tasmania would be a very advantageous solution to the current situation and would have numerous and multifaceted benefits, both to the new arrivals and to the receiving communities.

There was an acknowledgment of the multiple calls of concern across Australia and internationally about the standards of care, legality, human rights issues and exorbitant cost of current government policies with regard to people seeking Australia's protection from harm.

The critical necessity for multi-partisan political support for such a project to be brought to fruition was a common theme and that robust and sensible parliamentary debate with regard to such a proposal should ensue thereby enabling a consensus across all levels of Tasmanian Government.

Tasmania has a positive track record in extending protection and care to people in crisis. The Summit commended previous and current compassionate programs that provide hospitality and human decency here in Tasmania to refugees from many nations. Tasmanian has been greatly enriched by those from refugee backgrounds, who now occupy a variety of roles, including senior leadership, in many sectors of our society. In general Tasmania has much to give, and has a strong will to serve.

Tasmania currently faces its own challenge, needing substantial capacity building to generate new employment and a sustainable economy. A fraction of the millions of dollars currently expended on offshore policies, if wisely spent in Tasmania, would be transformational.

Speaker Julian Burnside proposed that *“asylum seekers could live, work and spend in the Tasmanian community while their refugee status is assessed. If every single one of them stayed on Centrelink benefits for the whole time it took to assess their asylum claims, it would cost about \$500m per year – all of which would be spent in Tasmania. To induce the Tasmanian government to go along with this, the Commonwealth could offer it an additional \$1bn a year. The benefit to the Tasmanian economy is obvious, which may explain why the public response in Tasmania to my proposal has been overwhelmingly positive”*.

¹ Beyond the Boats: Building and asylum and refugee policy for the long term. Report following high-level roundtable; Nov 2014; Australia 21, Centre for Policy Development; and Andrew and Renata Kaldor Centre for International Refugee Law at UNSW.

It must be recognised that AUD\$1billion is less than a third of the conservative estimation of Australia's current expenditure of AUD\$3.3 billion spent on the detention of asylum seekers². The actual cost to Tasmania to undertake on-shore processing of the existing and projected numbers of asylum seekers, while not yet expertly costed, is likely to be a fraction of this value. Initially a component, approximately 50%, could be allocated to project/infrastructural costs, with subsequent transition to the vast majority being invested into employment generating activities. This injection of income if spent wisely has the potential to create up to 10,000 enduring new jobs in Tasmania across the first five years.

A graduated, iterative approach to on-shore processing in Tasmania would help ensure that required services and resources had adequate time to build the level of support to ensure successful outcomes. A four year project plan with commencement at the earliest opportunity would be preferred. This would consist of a pilot project taking up responsibility for 10 - 25% of total national refugee processing during the first year. With this subsequently expanded, subject to ongoing evaluation, over the following four years to 25-50%, 50-75%, and then 75-100% of Australia's refugee processing, and that the corresponding funding be made available to Tasmania in each financial year. We recommend that the pilot project commence in 2015.

Community-based detention has been proposed as the main strategy employed, and is expected to cover >95% of all arrivals. Contracts drawn up in the language of the new arrival, clearly stating the terms of community-based detention and the consequences of any breaches would need to be developed with regular engagement with relevant government agencies a requirement.

Capable service organisations are already operating within Tasmania and nationally with the ability to provide and monitor community-based detention; the availability of grant funding would enable the prompt commencement of on-the-ground activity. Competence, compassion and communication skills will be essential criteria. Access to interpreters and legal services will be mandatory.

Pontville Detention Centre and its related services could be re-activated to provide short-term accommodation (up to six weeks maximum) for entrants while primary identification and security issues are resolved. No-one will be indefinitely detained. Rather detainment contracts will be established with specified time-frames. This will engender much greater cooperation in the asylum-seeker claim investigation process.

Community-based detention would be decentralised across a range of communities on a statewide basis with prior assessment of "refugee ready" communities undertaken to ensure the availability of adequate infrastructure and services. Long term refugee settlement would continue to be distributed across the nation according to regional capacity and willingness, so Tasmania would only be expected to do its usual fair share of settlement.

There is clear support for utilisation of the balance of expected federal cost savings to investigate, develop and implement policy and practice changes that will reduce the need for asylum seekers to use dangerous maritime practices in their desperation to reach the safety of Australia. In light of the very large economic savings achievable to the Australian Federal Government these savings could be deployed to:

² Budget estimations made as of November 2014.

- Return Australia’s international aid to levels concurrent with our commitments and obligations
- Invest in expedited processing of refugee claims in Australia’s transit nations
- Supply all resources necessary to provide the comprehensive needs of refugees on arrival in Australia

The recommendations of the recently released “Beyond the boats: building an asylum and refugee policy for the long term” <http://cpd.org.au/2014/11/beyond-boats-refugee-report/> reflect considerably with the discussions and deliberations of the Summit and should be considered in concert with the proceedings.

The framework and proposal that will be developed from the findings of The Tasmania Opportunity Statewide Leaders Summit and input from other sources of local, national and international expertise looks certain to present the Tasmanian government a compelling argument for strong advocacy for a change from current policy and process, for reasons including:

- Compliance with international law, global neighbourhood obligations and human decency
- Australia’s international relations and reputation around this issue
- Strong fiscal and economic evidence of the benefit of investing a proportion of the extensive cost savings precipitated through these arrangements in Tasmania
- The need to address community concerns about current policy, thus reducing conflict and division
- The broad advantages to both State and Federal governments in transitioning from existing to proposed policies and practices.

Recommendations

- **That the Tasmanian Government recognise The Tasmania Opportunity as a Project of State Significance and as such publically endorse continued investigation and subsequent development of a comprehensive business case for Tasmania to establish itself as the national leader in safe, humane & dignified processing of people seeking Australia’s protection as refugees.**
- **That the Tasmanian Government commit to financially support the preparation of the business case through the provision of access to resources and expertise within the relevant Government Departments (State Growth, Treasury, Premier and Cabinet, Health, Education) and/or through the provision of a grant sufficient to enable the engagement of an appropriate high-level economic consultancy to formalise such a business case.**

Concurrent Round Table Discussions

Twenty topics relevant to the intent of The Tasmania Opportunity were chosen and Forum attendees were invited to take part in round table discussions on these topics. Participants could move between discussions to ensure all had the opportunity to have input into the topics they felt most relevant to their skill or interest.

1. *International & Regional Responsibilities and Strategies*
2. *Detention and Current Detainees: Transitioning from an Out-of-date Model*
3. *Regional Economics: Saving and Redirecting Billions of Dollars*
4. *Sociological Benefits to Tasmania*
5. *Economic Benefits to Tasmania*
6. *Caring for New Arrivals – Humanitarian and Human Resource Components*
7. *Caring for New Arrivals – Logistics and Facilities*
8. *Moving toward Constructive and Unifying Politics*
9. *Capacity Building and Employment*
10. *Refugee Settlement*
11. *Transitioning Successfully from offshore to Tasmanian Processing*
12. *Logistics of Tasmanian Arrivals: Enhancing Tasmania's Services Sector*
13. *Engendering a State of Welcome and Safe Open Communities*
14. *Spiritual Responses: Contribution of Churches and Religious Organisations*
15. *Mobilising and Utilising Volunteer Organisations*
16. *Valuing New Arrivals (Recognising and optimising hidden skills and abilities)*
17. *Cultural Celebration: A Spirit of Harmony in the midst of Increasing Diversity*
18. *Young Champions: Involving Tasmania's Youth*
19. *Healthy Bodies and Minds: Transforming Tasmanian Health and Education*
20. *Enhancing Community Understanding and Support: Promotions and Media*

Discussions were transcribed without identifying individual speakers by volunteers whose role it was to capture comments and discussion points. There was no requirement to reach conclusions with regard to each topic although some discussions made an effort to agree on some recommendations or agreed thoughts.

The notes from each discussion were collected up at the close of the Forum and were then transcribed and collated for inclusion in the Forum record. Preparation and writing of the discussion notes was undertaken by a number of The Tasmania Opportunity members and volunteers.

DISCUSSION 1.1: INTERNATIONAL & REGIONAL RESPONSIBILITIES AND STRATEGIES

There is a current misalignment of policy toward border security in the form of Operation Sovereign Borders. This military led operation with its focus to stop people smuggling and "turn back the boats" has introduced a new paradigm to the process of handling those seeking the protection of Australia. The draconian nature of this military approach coupled with offshore detention is deliberately camouflaged by declaring that a key purpose is to stop people smugglers and reduce deaths at sea. The secretive nature of the operation and the lack of transparency with regard to the safety of the boats once turned around provide little or no evidence that lives are still not being lost. Rather than trying to help people the present government appears to focus on how NOT to help people. The focus now seems to be on how not to protect those who seek protection and asylum in Australia.

There was a plea for political parties to more clearly articulate their policies. There is a real need for transparency. Community support is swayed by the use of language that denigrates asylum seekers as "illegals" when in fact those arriving by boat seeking Australia's protection have broken no laws.

There needs to be an intentional media campaign to tell the full story, to educate the community. For example it has been shown that humanitarian entrants make a greater contribution to Australian society than the average Australian (Hugo, G.J., 2013. *Refugee-Humanitarian Settlers in Australia: A Distinctive Economic Contribution*, *International Migration*, published online 25 April, doi: 10.1111/imig.12092).

There is a need for the community to build a better understanding of what it means to be an Asylum Seeker, what causes them to flee and why they are prepared to risk their lives in leaky boats.

To help counter the "push factor" with regard to asylum seekers it is necessary for Australia to place a greater emphasis on the quick and effective processing of clients in Indonesia and other overseas countries from which those seeking asylum in Australia begin their journey. It is felt that people will acquiesce to formal UNHCR and IOM processes if the processing happens quickly.

Funds allocated for *overseas' aid* should only be directed to *overseas' aid* and not for *border protection*. There should not be a cut in *overseas' aid*.

Greater emphasis needs to be placed on human rights and stamping out overseas' corruption.

For regional processing to be successful there needs to be cordial and trusting relationships between Australia and Indonesia.

DISCUSSION 1-2: DETENTION AND CURRENT DETAINEES - TRANSITIONING FROM CURRENT MODEL

POLITICAL SUPPORT

Politicians and political parties can only be influenced through a groundswell of public opinion. For Coalition MPs there is an obvious need to maintain the party line at least in public. There is value in seeking an approach that insures politicians are not seen to “lose face”. With all the current issues there is an increasing likelihood that the political “wind” will change and there needs to be a viable alternative ready to implement. From Tasmania’s perspective it is important that Tasmania is at the front of the queue. The need for senior business community support was reinforced as this would bear a high level of influence on Government. It was generally agreed that a multi-partisan political commitment was vital to ensure success.

PROCESSING OF ASYLUM SEEKERS

More investment is required to speed up the processing of asylum seekers. It was suggested that the current slowness of the process is due not only to the availability of resources but also as a deterrent. The UNHCR take on average around 90 days and most arrivals are already approved as refugees by the UNHCR. Speeding up the process would reduce the mental health issues that are causing big problems in off-shore and on-shore detention centres.

The lack of papers held by arriving asylum seekers was also discussed it was noted that in many instances these documents were unnecessary.

Processing of around 500 asylum seekers per month could be achieved dependent upon the level of support provided and availability of resources.

THE PONTVILLE FACILITY

The fact that Tasmania already has the facility at Pontville in place is seen as a key enabler and also adds to the cost effectiveness of the TTO option for on-shore processing of asylum seekers. There is a recognised need for community education around the use of these facilities but recent history would suggest that obtaining a reasonable level of acceptance would be achievable. There was general agreement that the Pontville facility would be greatly enhanced

by removing fences wherever possible and improving landscaping and general presentation (to make it family friendly).

EMPLOYMENT FOR REFUGEES

Asylum seekers, having completed preliminary security and health assessment should be allowed to be involved in volunteer or paid work. Many asylum seekers arrive as skilled workers and/or professionals. In some instances their intellect and skills identified them in their country of origin and that is why they were targeted for persecution. The simple fact that these people showed the initiative and capacity to make the often arduous and challenging journey to their point of transit demonstrates their ingenuity and willingness to work.

For any level of success the business community must be part of the process. Without a robust business plan it is hard to get businessmen and professionals to be publicly involved.

ACCOMMODATION FOR REFUGEES

The biggest challenge facing such a proposal is finding suitable and adequate accommodation. Government housing can't accommodate existing Tasmanian poor as it is. There would need to be further government investment in housing and funding for this would need to be considered in any business case. It would be important to ensure that any housing project catered for all accommodation needs not just new refugee population to stave off resentment. Need to investigate if/what housing is available both rurally/regionally and in urban areas.

Questions were raised with regard to church-owned housing stock and the situation surrounding the sale of Hayes Prison Farm and its suitability. Whatever solution is identified it was agreed that needs to be a state wide approach. It was thought important to ensure community based settlement was undertaken in areas where support mechanisms were already established – start with a small number of identified locations and then grow from there.

Investigation of previous successful settlement processes such as family resettlement in Mt. St. Canis, should be undertaken. It was also suggested that pilot programs coordinated by community churches and/or organisations could be implemented.

EDUCATION

Ensuring that children and teenagers get access to education as quickly as possible is very important.

There is an available resource through unemployed teachers and UTAS undergraduates.

DISCUSSION 1-3: REGIONAL ECONOMICS – SAVING AND REDIRECTING BILLIONS OF DOLLARS

Tasmania's economy suffers from the stressors of low skill base workforce and a lack of productivity. In some cases there is intergenerational unemployment and the educational attainment is the nation's worse. The potential for Federal sponsored schemes for refugee employment on special projects where lack of funding has meant that only the dole remains a constant for many of working age could be alleviated by Tasmanian job seekers working alongside refugees on new projects . The stereotype of refugees having no skillsets can be exposed and the refugees given the opportunity to impart their skills to "locals". It will not be a case of refugees taking the jobs of locals because the fact of federal funding being tied to the program.

The following records the group input and identifies some projects which could be employed, including short term labor shortage fix and longer term engagement in new industry growth.

EMPLOYMENT

- Derwent Valley – Refugee Welcome Zone
- Concern re closure of the Pontville Detention Facility
- Hayes Prison Farm up for sale – horticultural schemes
- Poatina – 457 visas – short term labour. Opportunity for seasonal labour – dairy, fruit picking, agriculture
- Must reduce red tape to allow asylum seekers and refugees to access work
- Asylum Seekers/Refugees – case study = Hmong People resettled in Aust. Introduced new agricultural methods/products – niche market
- Dairy industry – animal husbandry – knowledge/skills
- Micro loans for women
- Small business ideas
- Collectives
- Tasmanian Micro Enterprise – Unity Church working group to finalise Micro Development Enterprise Scheme
- Injection into public sector of funds for Health, Education
- Transparency needed
- Cut Red Tape – Application fees/business registrations

- OH&S
- Insurance – vehicle/transport, public liability
- Assistance with PAYG compliance
- Right to work/Volunteer capacity
- Must introduce Job Skills training
- Engage employers – supermarkets, bakeries
- Demonstrate flow-on positive job growth
- Demonstrate that employment of asylum seekers does not impact
- Investigate current provisions for backpackers, holiday visas – does this need to be revisited so asylum seekers can do this work?
- Need to collect and assess evidence for new labour sources – agriculture
- Business person in Melbourne who places refugees for Tasmanian agricultural industries (Bright Employment)
- Need skills identification and register for asylum seekers and refugees (employment agency specific for this role??)

HOUSING

- Need to quantify Tasmania's capacity to house asylum seekers
- Pontville. Army Barracks, Hayes Prison Farm, Church Camps, Empty Schools, Rural towns

HEALTH & MEDICAL

- Prepare for emergencies in Off-shore facilities, e.g. Cholera or disease outbreak, lack of fresh water (Nauru), Community violence against Asylum seekers
- Must earmark allocation of funds to increase medical services

DISCUSSION 1-4: SOCIOLOGICAL BENEFITS TO TASMANIA

SUMMARY OF SESSION

This session considered the existing societal attitude to refugees, accepting at the outset the perception created by the current federal government of refugees as illegals, possibly societies misfits, unable or unwilling to engage or to work productively (or at all). There is currently no attempt to dissuade the community of this perception and this group session looked at ways of reversing the stereotypical portrayal and actually presenting refugees as a way to lift community values. The group worked on how to bring about the required changes to attitude and importantly, how to measure achievements. The lack of local measuring tools was acknowledged but agreed to work from mainland and international data and precedent as a first measure.

WHAT IS THE GENERAL VIEW OF NEW ARRIVALS?

- Disengaged, no call to action
- Not considered a present or pressing issue
- Indifference
- Reluctance to consider change
- Tasmania has the least ethnically diverse culture
- No-one who speaks their language so people (refugees, asylum seekers) coming might feel isolated
- Bringing people in will bring diversity and support for each other within the community
- Who is disengaged?
 - “A broad brush” of people.
 - Mostly middle class, ‘politically correct’ worries
 - Church people who are confused about being ‘faith correct v’s politically correct’; upsetting people
 - People who are trusting the government because they ‘should’
- How to engage these people?
 - Old immigrant ‘role reversal’, people discussing as if they were coming here now etc.
 - More education, there is a lack of education and information openly and freely available
 - Many places are ‘refugee welcoming’ and it is time to start acting out the words we use.
 - Need to promote in a non-threatening way

- Seeing them, referring to them as ‘friends’ rather than ‘refugees’, finding words that are non-threatening and removed from the now poorly and politically loaded current terms.

HOW CAN FEAR AND IGNORANCE BE ADDRESSED?

- Finding a common connection point
 - Health interests/work
 - Financial/economic
 - Backgrounds
- Seeing new arrivals as neighbors not strangers to fear
 - What are our expectations?
 - Understanding who it is that is coming
 - Having people not treated in the same category/way as early migrants to Australia
- Using media in a positive way (i.e. documentaries, promotion TV spots, schools, etc.)
- Seeing that they fill a gap (builders, fruit pickers, nurses, health workers, disability sector, agricultural workers, etc.) “Builders and labourers are in short supply in Hobart for example”; “Poatina has had to bring workers in from Tonga to pick fruit because no-one else wanted to.”
- Brings people to a sense of community
- We need to put a face on those coming, personalise it rather than treat them as statistics.

HOW CAN SOCIOLOGICAL BENEFITS TO TASMANIA BE MEASURED?

- Observation: cultural exchanges, changes in our social environment through cultural exchange’ i.e. food, culture, arts.
- We need to consider exactly what we want to and need to measure?
 - Statistics?
- Changing demographics: younger refugees coming into a community top heavy with older residents
- Agricultural workers, other work areas with skills shortage, see if the shortage remains
- Measure the boost to economy
- How many more people engage in volunteer positions?

WHAT SOURCES OF DATA EXIST NOW?

- Mainland experiences/statistics (numbers of refugees/asylum seekers in communities, how many are working/employed, how many volunteer, children and families, unaccompanied minors, living arrangements, access to services, etc.)
- Looking at countries who are undertaking similar programs, learning from what already works and what doesn't (i.e. Italy)
- Statistics of how younger people impact older communities
- Looking at migrants from the 50's, the benefits of new people and cultures and experiences.
- More jobs created by new ideas and opportunities:- statistics on what and how jobs are created (i.e. baristas are common now because of the introduction of new ideas about coffee as a result of immigration)
- Look at cultural globalisation
 - Data
 - Visual
 - FP Data
 - Churches
 - Institutions (schools, universities, health etc)
 - Political

WHO ARE OUR BEST ADVISORS?

- Go to multi-cultural groups
- Direct dialogue with the asylum seekers/refugees
- People who are suitable to mentor
- Empathetic people especially those who have similar experiences to be advisors, mentors, ambassadors between new arrivals and established Australians/Tasmanians.
- Marketing /selling advisors
- Sell the image-what words do we need to use?
 - rather than the needs of these people, how we need them.
- Teachers/facilitators
- Sell Tasmania: "Tasmania: Australia's gift to the world."
- Tasmania: known for its friendliness but can also be known for its 'red neck' attitudes
- Using something in the narrative that stays as a foundation
- Focusing on the gifts of those coming and not their needs

- What is the consciousness shift happening?
- How to build networks
- Use of local media, current material and new, i.e. Mary Meets Mohammed, into local communities in Tasmania to grow the network and awareness (schools, clubs, churches, etc.)
- Education is key

Using educators –educational packages presented by a variety of people to a variety of groups and social sectors, i.e. politicians, youth, elderly, lower socio economic groups, churches, social clubs, educational institutions, etc.

DISCUSSION 1-5: ECONOMIC BENEFITS TO TASMANIA

POSITIVES

- Demand for services locally
- Volunteers population
- Employment (unpopular jobs)
- Exposure to Australian culture
- Working population/ethnic
- Spending into community
- Expenditure on infrastructure (need solid agreements)
- Businesses started by refugees
- Community activity/involvement – ownership and leadership roles
- Opportunity for locals – employment and housing
- Utilisation of the existing infrastructure in Pontville/Brighton
- Clear articulation of economic model
- Cost in dollar terms versus the cost in human terms (detention and [adverse impact on] mental health)
- Drawing people into regional isolated areas leading to sustainability for schools and public services [currently] in danger of closure
- Rural incentives to professionals who may stay on
- Offers of land and housing in country areas where land is not currently being worked
- [Increased diversity of] arts and crafts, food, culture increasing options for farmer's markets
- Increase in services and support for refugee community that comes via the UNHCR process

- Reduces [impact of the] interruption to education and training of individuals who need to support family still in camps [avoids] the loss of skills

NEED TO CONSIDER

- Funding for business case
- Lack of resources at a state government level
- Matching funding by government, business, and community organisations

[Need to avoid] “Getup’ type groups [to prevent being seen as] being too political.

DISCUSSION 1-6: CARING FOR NEW ARRIVALS – HUMANITARIAN AND HUMAN RESOURCES COMPONENTS

The themes discussed in this session group are similar to the issues raised in other previous session groups - integration, education, the use of volunteers and the potential for restricted settlement areas for an initial period.

The earlier success of integration of the Kosovar refugees was cited as a way forward, particularly as it used volunteers very ably. There is a need to further explore the issues and themes identified.

SHORT TERM DETENTION

The group noted that Tasmania had gained valuable experience at Pontville – a question was raised if this expertise had been lost and what was needed to recover it? Concerns were noted around the appearance of the Pontville facilities. If short term detention centres are to be utilised then provide trees and gardens, remove fences or move ensure they are made less visible to those in detention. While the use of Pontville was welcomed by the Brighton council others nearby were not so keen.

It was broadly agreed that children should not be held in detention.

COMMUNITY BASED PROCESSING

While there was some concern with regard to making Tasmania “one big detention centre” the positive aspects of opening up the state to receive these people and utilise their skills was discussed at length. Regional settlement may encourage people to be open to live in regional areas rather than cities. Country people are more understanding and compassionate. City folk

are more used to controlled environment. Smaller communities are more able to get to know new people. Children settle into schools with minimal discrimination. Small communities may be better able to make room for people to establish their identity.

The fact that the N.W. Coast has had no new arrivals recently was noted – this could reinvigorate the NW Coast – agriculture. Agriculture needs workers.

Tasmania is seen as friendly place with a broad level of diversity within a small geographical space.

Influx of people makes small communities viable. Local school and hospital.

How much needs to be done by local government? Get the people on side. Success depends on the motivation of local councilors and mayors.

Local government needs to be the driving force. Local Government Association of Tasmania is on side. There are already a number of Refugee Welcome Zones.

The so called “brain drain” from Tasmania may be reduced as this may present job opportunities for young people.

Foster relationships in the community.

CHALLENGES OF MANAGING SHORT TERM AND LONGER TERM PROCESSING AND SETTLEMENT

There is some evidence to suggest that some humanitarian arrivals in Tasmania do not stay long, there is a tendency for people to move to the mainland. Immigrant communities are often seen as too small and do not provide a viable community base. This may change as immigrant communities grow. If new arrivals have restricted settlement areas for an initial period this may allow communities to grow and become more stable. The Hmong community was successful in agriculture, but most moved to Melbourne. There are examples of successful models in Victoria such as Iraqi settlement in Shepparton. There needs to be a reasonable population in order to create a viable community. Single incidents of arrivals are not helpful, to justify investment, business, employment a consistent flow of arrivals is required.

Refugees get bored, especially young males. Families with children integrate better. Families build communities. There is a thirst for knowledge and education – need to involve schools and facilitate sporting connections.

The successful integration of Italian settlement during the early building of Hydro schemes was raised. The importance and problems of belonging was illustrated in “The Sound of One Hand Clapping, R Flanagan 1997”. This reinforces the need to foster meaning and purpose in life.

Mental health issues can be managed. We have known the issues for years. How can we change things?

Work rights are vital for successful settlement and integration. Allow refugees to volunteer.

The 1999 short term settlement of Kosovar refugees at Brighton was cited as an example of success. The Kosovar refugees were welcomed by the whole of Tasmania.

VOLUNTEERS

An excellent volunteer base is seen as a success factor in humanitarian intake.

It is important that we ascertain what skills and experience are needed.

Utilise the experience of our ageing population.

Volunteers are important to help immigrants to understand “Aussie” culture.

EDUCATING THE COMMUNITY

Need to educate our own community about acceptance of refugees.

Need a campaign to stop the use of the term “illegals” to promote understanding of the law - seeking asylum is not illegal.

Address fears of the unknown. Educate people about the truth regarding refugees - health, education, welfare. Negative propaganda is widely believed.

People are frustrated at the level of the political conversation. Politics is holding us back.

Reclaim the “fair go” and the “common good”.

Get to know individuals. Easy to hate and fear groups, not so easy to hate individuals.

Acceptance is driven from the bottom, not imposed from the top.

DISCUSSION 1-7: CARING FOR NEW ARRIVALS – LOGISTICS AND FACILITIES

SUMMARY OF SESSION

This session produced mixed outcomes warning of a refugee drift if there was not a large degree of community and facility support for new arrivals. Whilst an “unfenced” Pontville was offered as a single solution the lack of transport options generally was seen as a negative, as were current employment restrictions even those affecting the free use of volunteer services e.g. OHS and insurance. Above all, community engagement was identified as a barometer of success.

Who are the new arrivals? – Single males mostly, couples and some large families

Their NEEDS:

- Accommodation: where would it be?
- Education: ESL and from early to further education
- Work: endeavouring to create self-sufficient groups within the community

For long-term communities to be established in Tasmania the requirements include:

- Career opportunities with connection to community
- Help to become part of the larger local community/neighbourhood, e.g. a welcoming school environment and acceptance of new religious groups (with spaces for worship, leading up to dedicated places for worship)

WHAT WILL KEEP NEW ARRIVALS IN COMMUNITIES IN TASMANIA?

(NOTE: many new arrivals move on to Melbourne and Sydney to seek family or community connections or in the search for more likely employment)

Education facilities & longer term career opportunities (seasonal farming jobs etc. only keep people temporarily)

STEPS IN CATERING FOR NEW ARRIVALS

(NOTE: Accepting that a short initial period of detention is necessary for medical and other checks)

- Open up Pontville Centre, leaving women and children “un-detained”.
- Give freedom to seek employment
- Create opportunities for families to take in new arrivals, and implies simplifying procedures and paperwork to enable this.

SUMMARY OF RESOURCES - ALREADY EXISTING OR LACKED**Existing:**

- Pontville Detention Centre;
- a “culture of community” which still exists in Tasmania, especially in rural areas
- if new arrivals can be looked after and welcomed, anything is better than off-shore processing;
- people with new insights can create their own opportunities (e.g. nature strip gardens & Salamanca Market stalls).

Equivocal:

- Political will;
- whether community acceptance/welcome exists – from this other resources and solutions arise;
- we need to learn from those helping/administering Kosovar refugees.

Gaps:

- Transport within regions and between more isolated places;
- possible marginalising of well-qualified people whose skills might have been utilised;
- allow self-reliance to flourish and recognise prior learning to enable ways of progressing in employment/careers;
- find out from the Migrant Resource Centre what are the advantages and disadvantages of the Tasmanian context;
- the current regulations governing volunteering and casual employment unnecessarily add restrictions to opportunities – form a task group to tackle compliance issues?
- Australia-wide prohibition on employment of people under present visa provisions.

DISCUSSION 1-8: MOVING TOWARD CONSTRUCTIVE AND UNIFYING POLITICS

- There are a number of challenges needing to be faced. From two levels of government focused on economic rather than humane policies and practices, to the common person's fears. Fears that are often unfounded, e.g. "these people are coming to steal our jobs". But to those who hold them the fears are real and deserve informed responses.
- There is also a significant power differential between asylum seekers and those who hold political power. This political power is subject to the votes of the people.
- So how do we turn the politicians around? Economic arguments are part of that. We need to demonstrate to them the positive economic impact of refugees. Influence can be exerted on a large scale through small-scale interactions amongst and across a broad network, it often the people with whom we are the least connected who offer us the most opportunities – a strategy for success for the TTO is to embed its ethos in as many networks as possible. This then opens the gateway for uptake of The Tasmania Opportunity on a large scale and builds momentum for the cause (*The Strength of Weak Ties; MS Granovetter; Am Journal of Sociology, Vol 38, Issue 6, May 1973, 1360-1380*).
- Pontville was identified by the group of having a clear economic benefit to Tasmania.
- There are some good models of indigenous communities within the mining communities.
- All parties need to be involved in the process and developing this proposal - business and enterprise, the church community and local government e.g. Brighton Council based on its past experience. How may a federation of non-partisan regional councils be harnessed?
- The Franklin was saved "from the bottom up".
- There are ways to sway public perceptions. We need to build unity around a pride in Australia doing the best by others. It is an opportunity to improve our standing in the region e.g. with Indonesia.
- We can touch on our history with say the Kosovar refugees.
- We need articulate people who can champion this and with simple language assuage people's fears and galvanise the community. There are some "myths" and unhelpful terms that need factual dispelling, like "illegals" and the concept of a queue.

- The successful introduction of the NDIS is an example of overcoming people's unfounded fears and misunderstandings.
- The community will ultimately be richer through the presence of asylum seekers, and some of their stories need to be told.
- Some strategic work is needed. Inventories and registers need to be compiled of what resources, assets and talents we have.
- A vision statement and proposed model to which we and the state politicians can commit is needed. It then needs to be taken "out there" to the wider community, and ultimately to the Federal level (the biggest jump).

SESSION 1-9: CAPACITY BUILDING AND EMPLOYMENT

- Time and energy needs to be invested research, networking and "dreaming the future".
- Tasmania has a number of niche and innovative areas that provide opportunities e.g. agriculture, forestry, tourism, science, wine trails. Investment in the educational sector will be vital. Support in speaking English and identifying cultural factors similarly. What entry-level jobs are there? Microfinance is already operating in Tasmania and may be an option.
- Small business is a diverse sector that may provide employment opportunities, though may need some encouragement to be sufficiently motivated. The New Zealand clever country for innovation may be a helpful model. Who may be Tasmania's innovators?
- Community based care for Tasmania's aging population provides opportunities e.g. in care, transport, maintenance. Investment in nursing homes would have a multiplier effect. The Tasmania Opportunity may be an opening to introduce into Tasmania some higher education courses not currently available e.g. occupational therapy. Funding would be needed, and the language question answered. This would also strengthen community integration.
- A motor vehicle driving skills program would be needed. This could create local employment, as well as for refugees once skilled, enabling them to teach others within their language group.
- Given the State Governments limited funds and already struggling areas like education and health Federal resources would be needed, and prudently invested so as to maximize the benefit to the State.

- The accommodation question both raises questions and brings opportunities. Is there under-utilised housing already available? What transitional accommodation might be needed? Would others open up their homes to asylum seekers, participate in regular community meals, etc. as a way of breaking down barriers? Have to get past resentments from “age of entitlement” perspectives.
- What will the refugees themselves bring to the table? They will create some of their own markets and social enterprise corridors. They will have some of their own unique skills and capacities toward supporting themselves that need respecting. What ways is there of them being welcomed and given room to celebrate their stories e.g. a welcome walk?
- There will be extra dimensions encountered when the next step of regional settling ensues.

DISCUSSION 1-10: REFUGEE SETTLEMENT

- No discussion was held on this topic

DISCUSSION 2-1: TRANSITIONING SUCCESSFULLY FROM OFFSHORE TO TASMANIAN PROCESSING

According to the current Migration Act the Australian mainland is excised from the migration zone. Changing the legislation to “*unexcise*” Tasmania so that it is part of the migration zone could be a “face-saver” for the Government.

There is clear evidence that detention damages people and that those imprisoned the longest are the most harmed. (Refer *The People Smuggler* and *The Undesirables* describing the plight of those in detention). The Government may be using prolonged detention as a means to “*stop the boats*”.

The cost of the “Asylum Seeker Program” is putting pressure on the Government. Education and Health programs are being cut back. An alternative needs to be found as a way to stop the Government losing face. The Tasmanian Opportunity is being floated as a credible alternative. Tasmania would be an alternative to Manus Island and Nauru. It has an advantage over the Cambodian proposal. Neither Port Moresby nor Manus Island were considered to be safe for the settlement of processed asylum seekers.

Security-wise Tasmania has the advantage of being an island.

Pontville could be successfully used as it was with Kosovar refugees. It is close to the city and facilities. The fence could be removed and residents could come and go into the wider

community. It could be used as a “Reception (Process) Centre” for pre-settlement processing. Settlement would follow and be done nationally. It was recently used as an A Pod.

It is clearly important to get the State Government in favour of this proposal. There is a risk that they may hide behind the Federal Government. Senator Eric Abetz is a key or pivotal point for the acceptance of The Tasmanian Opportunity (TTO). As Minister for Employment and a senior Tasmanian Senator it is important to show him how TTO would provide employment for Tasmanians and how the proposal would economically benefit a Tasmania currently in economic and employment crisis. So we need to consider how best to market TTO to him and the Tasmanian Government. Perhaps it could be promoted as a pilot project.

All Tasmanians need to see the benefit of The Tasmanian Opportunity, but they need to be prepared. Distributing the processed arrivals around the State could help toward that. Cowra and Shepparton have been successful; we would do well to research those models. During the transition process there will be a need for a team of professionals, including case workers, for a step-wise approach for processing. Nikolas Proctor’s input could be helpful.

However there are a number of fear factors in Australia regarding Asylum Seekers. These bring a conflict between the humanitarian role and the fear factor. The “Right to Work” needs to be considered. According to the “No Advantage” legislation arrivals cannot work until they have been processed. If arrivals are granted Bridging Visas they cannot work. (neither Sweden nor Italy have Bridging Visas). The organising committee needs to prepare answers to the questions likely to arise from those opposed to the proposal.

In reaching for a workable model securing funding in a step wise basis the following parameters may be worth considering:

2016-17 for 25% intake

2017-18 for 50% intake

2018-19 for 100% intake

- Requesting \$1 billion per year from Year One, the initial installment helping to prepare for the following stages.
- Initially bringing women and children to the Reception Centre.

There are unanswered questions as to how The Tasmanian Opportunity might affect the boat turn back policy and boat arrivals, and whether a change of Government would alter the present policy?

DISCUSSION 2-2: LOGISTICS OF TASMANIAN ARRIVALS: ENHANCING TASMANIA'S SERVICES SECTOR

WHAT ARE THE NECESSARY INGREDIENTS FOR TASMANIA TO PRACTICE AS A CENTRE OF EXCELLENCE IN REGARD TO THE TASMANIA OPPORTUNITY, & HOW WELL-EQUIPPED IS THE SERVICES SECTOR?

There are already a number of fine organisations in place and who were able to “get up and going” quickly for Pontville e.g. Red Cross, Migrant Resource Centre, Centacare. The services will pull together around something like this. Red Cross currently provide six weeks of intense mentoring for boat arrivals (12 months for others though now there's nothing because of so few releases). The Greens' employer incentive program to support refugee employment/business mentoring should be investigated for relevance.

Pontville is an obvious asset that could be utilized. Detailed work needs to be done to determine its capacity relative to the anticipated need e.g. if it took 4-6 weeks for initial processing and 24,000 persons were to be processed in one year that's 2,000 per month. Could it handle the initial processing, immunisation, housing prior to refugees moving into the wider community.

Which communities? If rural, is there unused housing available and are the necessary services also available? Preparation is needed in the wider community to ensure resilience e.g. pre-settlement education about refugees and process and values. There is a need to identify potential communities for resettlement and for the preparation process to begin.

There are other community stakeholders who could be harnessed. As a result of job cuts there is a talent pool of retrenched public servants with bureaucratic abilities out there. In the university sector there are students in human rights, law, politics and town planning who may be willing to volunteer or do internships and who may then be hired when funding comes in. Could this become a branch of 'State Growth' department in the State Government?

The political, legal and social processes all need to be linked and overlap. A skills inventory of the supportive constituency is needed.

WHAT ARE THE CRITICAL SERVICES THAT NEED TO BE IN PLACE TO SUPPORT REFUGEES COMING INTO THE COMMUNITY?

Mental health is at the top of priorities. We will need to prepare not only for refugees, but for mentally vulnerable refugees. A challenge is 'How can we address mental health needs when we can't take away any of the causes'. The hope would be that it will be less of a concern once

long-term detention disappears. The level of suicides will provide a benchmark. Phoenix provides services for trauma survivors.

Visa resolution and family reunion will also be high priority needs, e.g. non-boat people: women who fly in alone and claim asylum. On-shore processing will require its own department. Advocacy services will be needed. Considerable education will be needed of health professionals and interpreters.

Community education will be vital e.g. Red Cross have utilized story-telling productively via in-school humanitarian education. The community will need education to appreciate the depths of the despair, worry, and stress of traumatized people. Social connections will need to be built to get past perceptions of refugees who have reported 'I don't want to leave my house because I know Tasmanians hate us.'

Integration of all of this will require a department-integrated approach, ideally with the State Government as the developer of the project. Clearly they will take some convincing.

From a local government perspective do we have appropriate policy & humanitarian expertise? Tertiary level and in-service training in social services may be needed to support this.

Since Tasmania has highest level of volunteers per capita utilization of the volunteer base will be critical. Community agencies may be able to assist in equipping them e.g. training them in Mental Health First Aid.

In the first year it needs to be iterative. There needs to be a plan that outlines how the program unfolds e.g. prioritises who comes first, and establishes a refugee care coordination department. The needs will be well beyond our current capacity. For Kosovo there were 500 arrivals over eight weeks. Even though there was only a short planning time knowing it was time-limited helped toward its success. TTO is different – being long-term and requiring significant social change.

However we need to keep visible that Tasmania is the right place to care for these people. TTO would change our international reputation. It would be an economic win affecting Tasmania's capacity for employment, medical services, etc.

Obviously there are also foreign policies involved. Currently these funds prop up Nauru and PNG and their withdrawal will have an impact.

Another question is what social policy approach is most helpful –

- a) Deficit model: focusing on the problems and the need to fix them
- b) Appreciative inquiry model: (David Adams) leading to resilience, social inclusion and asking what do these people have to offer to and benefit our communities?

What is needed is a community development model that harmonizes our intention rather than a welfare-dependency mindset. It isn't expected that that refugees would opt to "bludge", rather that people will arrive with both skills, potential and a keen willingness to work.

An integrated approach is needed toward housing. "Ghettoization" (like occurred in Cabramatta with Vietnamese refugees) needs to be worked against although it's important to have enough of same cultures together for cultural support. How would house pricing work to blend both poor and non-poor?

DISCUSSION 2-3: ENGENDERING THE STATE OF WELCOME AND SAFE OPEN COMMUNITIES

- Progress of welcoming/safe communities – have started doing well
- Engender Break O'Day Welcome & Support
 - Welcome – home stay
 - New friends as opposed to refugees
 - St Marys-East Coast – new group, hope to spread
 - Refugees from mainland, Hobart. Launceston – rural experience
- Provide places of worship – safe, sacred, e.g. shared multi-faith venue
- Encourage
 - Volunteers – meet & greet
 - Explore how to set up friendship/support groups
 - New ways of engaging a/s, refugees – internet & Facebook
- Expand settlement sector community can safely engage without being overwhelmed
 - Find people in regional areas – long-time residents to embrace, support inclusion/welcome
 - Method – step process, planning to make welcome work in rural areas
 - Access locals
 - Sound cloud channel, smart phones, internet
 - Walk Together Hobart
 - Encourage police understanding
 - Encourage Fire authority programs
 - Inform refugees – safety local processes
 - Learner Driver program

- Resources Needed to Optimise
 - Education & training
 - Educate the community - acceptance, particularly in schools
 - Money and resources needed
 - Find area where established enthusiasm (e.g. Break O'Day) to establish pilot program
 - Area that needs new families
 - Reaching Out - Department of Health
 - Embed into cancer screening, ambulance service, RHH
 - Mobilise & manage volunteers
 - Hobart – Tas. Asylum Seekers Support
 - Launceston – Safe Asylum Social Support
 - Co-ordinate resources/management
 - Safeguards, protections for refugees
 - Embed into policy - skill & knowledge – teach them how rather than do it for them

- Where to from here?
 - Coordinate today's ideas/suggestions/recommendations
 - Commitment from federal & state governments for existing community organisations to meet increasing demands + meeting community's wider needs as well (e.g. neighbourhood houses, learner driver programs)
 - Bipartisan approach
 - Moral approach
 - Convince governments of economic/positive benefits
 - Another forum – specific working groups
 - Work on particular subjects
 - Re-visit – meet to formulate proposals

DISCUSSION 2.4: SPIRITUAL RESPONSES: CONTRIBUTION OF CHURCHES AND RELIGIOUS ORGANISATIONS

The Churches Task Force has presented to the government their view that the detention centres need to be closed and offered to care for the asylum seekers. No response has been received. It would mean approximately 2,500 needing to be housed and supported.

WHAT DO WE KNOW OF HOW THE CHURCHES ARE POSITIONED, AND WHAT WOULD A COMBINED RESPONSE LOOK LIKE?

- a) Gateway Devonport have indicated a willingness to receive ten families now.
- b) Research is needed to determine what other churches are in a similar position or could be if asked, and precedents of past supporting groups need to be checked out e.g. The unsuccessful Community Proposal Pilot.
- c) It also needs to be recognized that there are a large number of older / smaller congregations that would be unable to do housing programs.
- d) What ongoing financial support could this require and for how long?
- e) Would asylum seekers be free to work or receive full Centrelink benefits?
- f) Could short-term responses like allocation of spare rooms and beds for asylum seekers and refugees who have nowhere to 'land' be successful in the longer term? This was a program request from Julian Burnside that could be managed by small groups or churches.
- g) A system of "home stays" (breaks for) refugees/asylum seekers is currently being set up in Break O'Day region by local churches. It would provide transitional short term, relaxing, catch- your-breath space whilst being cared for/welcomed on arrival from a detention centre.
- h) The 'disconnect' from the issue is as big in the churches as it is in the wider community. If conservative Christians knew that women were coming to mainland Australia from Nauru to have abortions because they are so depressed and fearful, would they want Nauru closed?
- i) Are ministers and church leaders supporting / educating congregations to encourage the church 'into action'; could a combined church presentation be made to Scott Morrison or other efforts made to influence government at the higher leadership level?
- j) Local church involvement would require co-ordination, communication, education and a sense of doing what they sense God requires rather than being 'politically correct'.
- k) This is an issue of human rights so we should all be working together (churches, secular groups, organizations) to harness resources and bring a combined response to support

others regardless of their background e.g. create a 'Statement of Welcome' from faith based and other community groups.

CHILDREN'S ISSUES, PARTICULARLY FOR UNACCOMPANIED MINORS, NEED ENGAGEMENT.

- a) Ideally to be settled within families.
- b) Churches can use already established agencies to help settle them into community (i.e. Baptistcare).
- c) The foster home system may be able to be utilized; a question would be how to encourage / provide incentives for appropriate people to participate.

HOW DO WE IMPLEMENT THIS?

- a) How do we get groups to do it well and not set up to fail but to succeed?
- b) Planning and professionalism are crucial; the failed profit organization 'Home Stay Program' lacked connective support and had no formal contract. Allocation of responsibilities needs to be appropriate.
- c) Training in concerns and areas specific to asylum seekers and refugees is needed for both carers and organizations
- d) Ongoing structured support will need to be provided to the organisations offering services and care.
- e) To work cohesively a web-based network needs to be established to harness resources and minimize duplication; a resource portal is located at: www.acrt.com.au

DISCUSSION 2-5: MOBILISING AND UTILISING VOLUNTEER ORGANISATIONS

There are a number of organisations already with volunteers, working with Asylum Seekers, Humanitarian Entrants, and Temporary Protection Visas etc. in Tasmania. These include:

- Centacare Humanitarian Settlement Services
- Migrant Resource Centre(s)
- Uniting Church
- St Vincent de Paul – Social Justice Council
- Baptist Church
- Tas. Asylum Seeker Support

- Amnesty International
- Hobart and Launceston Safe Asylum Groups
- TAFE
- Red Cross

There are a number of areas identified as short-notice and short or long term accommodation that would already have support groups attached:

- Pontville
- Church Camps
- Hayes Farm
- Hostels
- Backpackers

Other organisations that could offer support:

- Volunteering Tasmania
- Tasmanian Greens – they have a major policy standing on Asylum Seekers
- Local Governments

RECOMMENDATION:

Start a program – “Are you ready”.

This could be similar to the emergency volunteer program currently being promoted through Emergency Services and Volunteering Tasmania. This utilises a data based program where people who may want to volunteer in times of emergency (in this case an influx of Asylum Seekers) can register with their skills and be directed to a suitable organisation for training and accreditation so they are ready when needed. This would also help in raising public awareness and increasing public acceptance of new arrivals.

A number of organisations conduct suitable training already and could be asked to register people who are ‘ready’ and issue ‘Ready’ cards and maintain regular contact with those people to ensure their continued ‘readiness’. These organisations already cover insurances etc. for their volunteers.

DISCUSSION 2-6: VALUING NEW ARRIVALS – (RECOGNISING AND OPTIMISING SKILLS AND ABILITIES)

The skills migrants bring are not always immediately apparent. There is a need to educate the community to realise that in spite of refugees' difficulty speaking English, many have qualifications, professions and business skills. They bring this knowledge and experience with them. Asylum seekers and refugees have many positive qualities, are industrious, ambitious and determined to succeed.

Children are an asset to assimilation, often learning English much faster than their parents and providing a link between home and school. It is important to advocate on behalf of the child and schools play an important part in this. There will also be financial benefits from having more families coming into communities.

An example of changing community attitudes occurred when a house was set up for a Vietnamese family at St Marys in northern Tasmania. At first the community resisted and yet, twelve months later the refugees were being referred to as "Our Vietnamese Family."

HOW VALUED DO THEY FEEL?

Politics are driven by public opinion and the media reflects people's attitudes and thoughts. Publicising facts does not always change opinions.

There needs to be a political move to de-stigmatise refugees. Personal stories of refugees can have a powerful effect and emotion can be a strong decider.

Concerns in the community about new arrivals receiving benefits must also be addressed. The fact that approximately 80% of boat arrivals have been found to be genuine refugees needs to be made clear.

The question was asked as to whether more efficient processing of asylum seekers in Indonesia, for example, would aid migration and deter people from risking their lives trying to reach Australia by sea.

HOW DO WE NURTURE POTENTIAL?

It will be important to encourage local councils to welcome refugees and to develop a register of people in the community, willing to provide accommodation and support to newly arrived refugees. Whilst Australians are willing to nurture fellow Australians, they need to treat refugees with as much generosity.

Already refugees are being accepted into communities. It will be necessary to prepare to support and assist greater numbers especially those asylum seekers who have been stigmatised by being held 'behind bars'.

When single, male asylum seekers in Pontville Detention Centre, were able to go to school and work, they began to assimilate into the community.

It would be interesting to find out how many refugees have settled in Tasmania in the past five years. Their stories (if they were willing to share them), would help to educate people and help to provide more understanding and insight into their situations.

A question which was asked was; “will there be ‘compassion fatigue?’” if large numbers of refugees arrive in Tasmania?

The importance of an assurance of adequate funding, to cope with an influx of refugees, is crucial. The public must be re-assured there will be no loss of benefits or resources to Tasmanians in the community. It is vital there is pre-sourcing of resources as the competition for funding causes friction between refugee groups.

It is important to keep families together. It was also suggested settlement could be conditional on refugees staying in Tasmania for three years.

Often, refugees move to the mainland and this can be seen as positive, meaning they have assimilated.

DISCUSSION 2-7: CULTURAL CELEBRATION: A SPIRIT OF HARMONY IN THE MIDST OF INCREASING DIVERSITY.

We would do well to ask “how well has Tasmania engendered a spirit of celebration of diversity?” We have done well in areas involving food – like Taste of Tasmania.

Opportunities for cultural integration can be developed where there are strong communities already in existence. Planned forums for community interaction and celebration of cultural diversity will assist this e.g. Town Hall dinners with seating alternating new arrivals with long-standing residents. Pro-refugee attitudes can be developed because there are already activities and enterprises within various communities that harness refugee skills and talents.

In parts of Launceston there will be a need to overcome racism and conduct programs like “Racism: It Stops With Me.”

If The Tasmania Opportunity is embraced the cultural mix of the state will be marginally changed. Tasmania could ultimately be celebrated for finding ways to celebrate and foster cultural diversity – and what welcoming new arrivals brings to the state in skills, innovation, resilience, the economy. It is an opportunity to represent traditional Australian values, contrary to those currently being applied and causing some of us grief.

DISCUSSION 2-8: YOUNG CHAMPIONS – INVOLVING TASMANIA'S YOUTH

Telling the story is a big part of the solution

You don't engage with numbers and statistics etc. – you do so when you hear individual stories.

As we build a credible argument, research would be a really important thing to help counter the misinformation and misunderstanding that is out there.

Fusion would see the asylum seeker crisis as being like the homelessness crisis of the eighties.

Fusion at Poatina would have the capacity to house a significant number of asylum seekers – have approximately 10 empty houses that could be made available. Built in support mechanisms are already available.

We need people to know what they can gain by getting to know the asylum seekers – their lives will be enriched.

Sport could be good way of bringing asylum seekers and the wider community together.

Uphold examples of people who have reached elite levels in sport e.g. Sudanese bloke playing in AFL.

Empower the youth – on both sides.

Sport, music and art create opportunities for relating naturally.

“Most young people just don't know much about the situation with asylum seekers. It doesn't relate to their daily lives”.

There is a need to build up a social justice culture within schools. Ultimately this should not be personality dependent, but becomes built into the DNA of the school.

We need to think about empowering asylum seekers as well so that there is authentic engagement with the community.

Novels about refugees etc. can be a helpful way of getting children to begin thinking about these issues. Overseas travel and having people from other cultures in the home has also helped.

We need to find ways to get the stories of asylum seekers out where they can be heard.

We need to build on the innate sense of justice that children have, rather than undermine it.

Children often see things the way their parents see it. Recently had a retreat and he invited along four asylum seekers. It's about meeting real people, hearing their stories etc.

Youth is the only way – we should be looking particularly at young people who will be voting at the next election.

Tae Kwan Do – current Tasmania champion is an Iranian refugee.

The Code of Conduct places huge restrictions of the ability of asylum seekers to tell their story – many are scared to do so because it may be construed as being politically motivated etc. How do we challenge some of these things that the government is getting away with? How do we connect asylum seeker kids with other kids in their schools?

DISCUSSION 2-9: HEALTHY BODIES AND MINDS: TRANSFORMING TASMANIAN HEALTH AND EDUCATION.

An important contributor to responding to Mental Health issues is building self-esteem and the capacity of people to look after themselves. The Phoenix Centre model would be worth looking at closely. Medicare Local is a good model. Services which now are seen as an exception need to become main-stream.

An environment needs to be created that brings accessible health services closer to home. People need to be empowered to take personal responsibility. There also needs to be consideration given as to how refugees can provide services to one another, drawing on their own skills base. Recognition of their skills and capacities can change public perceptions. Many of them have skills and want to work. Migrant visas allow them to work but the current barrier of them not being able to volunteer needs to be addressed.

The level of need will be related to an individual's background and pathway here. Non-crisis arrivals come with fewer health needs, and hopefully need less support. Boat people and those who have been traumatized through torture or off-shore detention will need more. Trauma may take years to be revealed. Good counseling and support needs to be available when needed and be culturally appropriate. Previous refugees may be well-situated to empathise and support newcomers. A higher proportion intake of family groups is preferable. Children are expected to be more robust and adaptable and able to productively connect with the older generation.

Good public transport systems accessible by both refugees and the wider community are vital. Its presence needs to be taken into account when making choices about where people are placed. Particularly when getting a driver's license is a long and complicated process.

Where relationships exist, people can more easily come into the community, and it will be important for Tasmanians to have connection.

Who is going to drive all of this? Will it be from the community up? Politicians are sensitive to political issues and less likely to lead. There is a need for a groundswell of community support (local government, religious organizations, churches, service organizations, medical organizations, etc.) leading to a critical mass vocalising the need and seeking the solution.

The Brighton/Pontville experience transformed an area which was poor by Australian standards (and changed Tasmanian views about refugees). Brooks High School is doing an impressive job with refugee integration; Ravenswood Heights School is bringing some innovative approaches. Models in Sweden, Germany and Italy need investigation.

Integration into educational processes requires a short period while the education system needs to adapt to those arriving, but children will soon fit in with the mainstream. There is potential in University and TAFE systems with courses like aged care not fully taken up.

There is a need for ongoing community education to counter negative arguments from sectors of local government, social services and the media. In Tasmania where “economics are everything” the proposal needs to demonstrate the economic benefits that flow from TTO. ‘Mary meets Mohammad’ has widespread recognition and could play an important part in galvanising support in the community. The end result could be Tasmania becoming a centre of excellence.

DISCUSSION 2-10: ENHANCING COMMUNITY UNDERSTANDING AND SUPPORT: PROMOTIONS AND MEDIA.

Tasmania has had success in refugee settlement because it is a small community with lower cost of living and rents. It has a mature approach to refugee settlement and is small enough to help people stand on their own two feet and to understand life in Australia. At the same time we need to educate the Tasmanian community as to the advantages to them that The Tasmania Opportunity proposes.

The Tasmania Opportunity program could be as big as we want it to be, although we need to take into consideration currently limiting resources such as water, power, and environmental matters.

Our economic diversity is an advantage. Refugees need to spread out across the community as this enhances tolerance and cohesiveness. There is a need for education and skills training for them to facilitate their integration into the community and the bringing of their unique contributions. Refugees need to find more reasons to stay in Tasmania rather than to leave.

We must not lose focus on refugees who have come through the UNHCR process. We also need to consider how the family resettlement program fits into The Tasmania Opportunity proposal.

APPENDIX 1**Attendees - The Tasmania Opportunity Tasmanian Leaders Summit**

	Name	Organisation (where provided)
Al	Hines	Red Cross
Alex	Bell	
Alison	Keane	
Alphonse	Mulumba	African Communities Council of Tasmania
Anthea	Maynard	Food Plants International
Bevan	Peel	
Christina	Booth	
Christine	Bennett	Uniting Church Tasmania
Clarissa	Adriel	TASS/Welcome to AUS/Amnesty
Damon	Thomas	Former Lord Mayor - Hobart/Speaker
Dave	Cooper	
David	Elliot	Elphin Road Continental Cakes
David	Gray	Vos Family Office
David	Strong	The Tasmania Opportunity
Denis	Hawkey	Uniting Church in Tasmania
Elizabeth	Haworth	Menzies Research Institute
Evelyn	Cooper	
Fiona	Oakley	Centacare Tasmania
Fred	Pribac	MCOT
Garry	Bailey	The Tasmania Opportunity
Gillian	Long	Migrant Resource Centre
Hannah	Cooper	
Heather	Kirkpatrick	Film Producer
Hung	Nguyen	Colo-rectal Surgeon LGH/Speaker
Ivan	Dean MLC	Legislative Council
James	Dryburg	Brighton Council- Town Planner/Freelance writer
Janet	Drummond	Break O-Day Council
Jason	Perdriau	Program Manager, Baptcare
Jeff	McClintock	
Jeff	McKinnon	The Tasmania Opportunity
Jin-Oh	Choi	Secular Party of Australia
Joanne	Ireson	Fusion Australia Limited
John	Paull	SLAF and UTAS
Julian	Burnside AO QC	Keynote Speaker
Karin	Le	
Karlin	Love	
Kim	Booth MP	Greens Leader - House of Assembly

Kym	Blechynden	
Lisa	James	
Margaret	Donaghy	Tasmanian Catholic Justice and Peace Commission
Maria	Boersma	Safe Asylum Tas & Migrant Resource Centre
Marion	Peel	
Mark	Brown	Australian Christian Lobby
Mark	Broxton	The Tasmania Opportunity
Martin	Gilmour	Senior Advisor (North), Office of the Premier
Mary	D'Elia	Baptcare
Max	Nicholls	Uniting Church Tasmania
Melanie	Abbott	UTAS & MCOT
Michael	Cleary	The Tasmania Opportunity
Michelle	O'Byrne MP	Labour Politician - House of Assembly
Michelle	Swallow	Facilitator - Leadership and Change Consultants
Mike	McCausland	
Misha	Coleman	CEO, Australian Churches Refugee Taskforce
Nichola	James	
Patsy	Skinner	
Paul	Mallett	Anglicare Tasmania
Peter	Elliott	Elphin Road Continental Cakes
Peter	Whish-Wilson	Greens Senator - Commonwealth
Phil	Edmondson	CEO Tasmania Medicare Local
Marilyn	Pitchford - Brown	Welcome to Country
Prue	McCausland	
Rod	Drummond	Break O-Day Welcome and Support Group
Ros	Lewis	Benevolent Society
Ruth	Forrest MLC	Independent Member for Murchison
Sahr	Andrews	Orphan and Widow Care Initiatives for Africa
Sean	McManus	Edmund Rice Centre
Sherryl	O'Malley	Tasmanian Greens - Kim Booth's staff
Sue	McKinnon	
Thomas	Moore	Senator Whish-Wilson (Staff)
Tony	Foster OAM JP	Mayor - Brighton Council
Vin	Hindmarsh	St Vincent de Paul Society