

**The Tasmania Opportunity congratulates Premier Mr Will Hodgman on today's announcement of a 500 Tasmanian Safe Haven Enterprise Visa agreement with the federal government.**



The Tasmania Opportunity Executive Officer Dr David Strong stated that today's announcement is the culmination of over a year of research, planning and communication with state leaders. The Tasmania Opportunity gathered Tasmanian leaders in a Statewide Leaders Forum in November 2014 and the resulting document "New Deal For Asylum Seekers" specifically proposed that Tasmania was an ideal location for, and could benefit from, hosting Safe Haven Enterprise Visa holders.

The Tasmania Opportunity has been actively communicating with state members of parliament about the importance and looming urgency of this issue, both to those seeking refuge from horrendous danger and hardship, and for the mutual benefits to Tasmanian regional communities.

The Tasmania Opportunity's New Deal proposal, today enacted in Mr Hodgman's announcement, builds on the success of other Australian regional communities that have already demonstrated the economic benefits of the supported settlement of asylum seekers. For example, Deloitte Access Economics (2015) report that the recent settlement of 54 Karen people in Nhill in Western Victoria has resulted in an economic benefit of more than \$40 million.

Dr Strong said today's announcement is an appropriate initial response to the international refugee crisis. It is commendable that Tasmania respond compassionately and effectively to the hardships and horrors of which we have become painfully aware. Tasmanians have a heart to serve. We could not sit back and bear the shame of inaction at this time of global crisis.

Tasmania's New Deal For Asylum Seekers embodies Tasmanian and Australian values of protecting the rights of disadvantaged people at home and abroad with a deep sense of morality and justice.

Dr Strong said that today's announcement provides a desperately needed reprieve for 500 people in a responsible, humane, controlled and hope-restoring endeavour. It gives Tasmanians the opportunity to be part of a positive way forward in humanising refugee settlement in the state and national interest. Many of Australia's finest citizens are from asylum-seeking entries in previous decades. Regional Australia needs and values such citizens.

This announcement is part of a strategic win-win-win proposal. Tasmanians, Australians and asylum seekers all benefit. Regional Tasmanian towns stand to gain in numerous ways including financially. Australia can start to lift its head. We are responding. We care. We will do what it takes to make these 500 people feel warmly welcomed to our communities. We look forward to their arrival with eager anticipation. We can make the world a slightly better place, by this compassionate step forward.

Dr David Strong 9 October 2015