




Speech By
Mark Ryan

MEMBER FOR MORAYFIELD

Record of Proceedings, 11 May 2016

MOTION: BORDER PROTECTION

 **Mr RYAN** (Morayfield—ALP) (6.03 pm): I rise to contribute to the debate on this motion. It is important for me to first acknowledge the contribution that migrants and refugees have made to Australia. Australia is a better, richer nation because our story is built on migration and multiculturalism. Our country is what it is today because of our people, including those who came to Australia as refugees and asylum seekers.

In 2013 the former federal Labor government implemented the Regional Resettlement Arrangement which significantly undermined the ability of people smugglers to trade on people's misery by effectively selling a boat journey to Australia. I note that federal Labor has consistently stated that it will stand firm on this policy to keep that perilous boat journey shut. Since the last federal election it is important to note that the combination of offshore processing and regional resettlement, together with the policy of turning back the boats, has stopped the flow of people smugglers from bringing vessels to our shores. On their own these things could not have been successful, but combined they have stopped the repugnant, inhumane practice by the people smugglers of trading on people's desperation and misery. Combined these things have ended a human tragedy.

The experience over the last few years shows that so long as it can be done safely it is important for a federal government of any political persuasion to retain the option of turning boats around. Whilst for many this is a difficult policy to accept, it has been shown that this policy has stopped the people smugglers from bringing vessels to our shores and has ultimately saved lives. I note that federal Labor has stated on the public record that it understands this policy can be hard for some people to accept, but federal Labor has also stated that we cannot allow human tragedies to ever happen again, where desperate people lose their lives at sea at the hands of greedy people smugglers.

Federal Labor also believes that Australia can do more to address the global refugee crisis. Australia needs a compassionate approach to asylum seekers which allows people seeking asylum to have their claim for asylum assessed safely and respectfully. At last year's ALP national conference opposition leader Bill Shorten unveiled Labor's immigration policy which incorporated a humane and compassionate approach to asylum seekers whilst maintaining appropriate deterrence to prevent people smugglers from profiteering from people's desperation and misery. Federal Labor's policy includes Australia playing a more important role in the world with respect to asylum seekers. I note that a Shorten Labor government would increase the Australian government's annual contribution to the UNHCR for its global work program and its work in South-East Asia and the Pacific. I also note that a Shorten Labor government would increase Australia's annual humanitarian intake to 27,000 by 2025. Currently the Turnbull LNP government has an annual humanitarian intake of 13,750. In other words, federal Labor's policy almost doubles the current annual humanitarian intake and demonstrates Labor's commitment to addressing this global humanitarian challenge.

In keeping with Labor's record of transparency and accountability in government, a Shorten Labor government will also empower the Commonwealth Ombudsman to provide independent oversight of Australia's onshore detention network and will continue to ensure that those working in the immigration system enjoy the benefit of whistleblower protection to speak out about any maladministration and corruption.

In addition, more must be done to protect children who are seeking asylum. To that end, I am pleased that a Shorten Labor government will appoint an independent advocate to pursue the best interests of those children, including the power to bring court proceedings on a child's behalf. A Shorten Labor government will also legislate to impose mandatory reporting of child abuse in all offshore and onshore immigration detention facilities. Bill Shorten and federal Labor have a plan to ensure Australia plays a larger role in responding to the current global refugee crisis, whilst at the same time preventing people dying at sea and preventing the people smugglers from profiteering.