Letter concerning family visa processing being stopped for refugees who arrived by boat

In December 2013, the Minister for Immigration issued Direction 62 which means that any family visa application already submitted to the Department of Immigration by a person who arrived by boat and was then found to be a refugee, will now be placed to the bottom of the processing pile. This effectively stops these family applications being processed. The impact of this policy change on hundreds of refugees who have been living in Australia and waiting for their family visa applications to be processed is devastating. Like so many other refugee policies in this country, it is beyond cruel.

Caroline Fleay and Lisa Hartley have sent a letter to every federal Coalition MP about the Abbott Government's recent policy detailing the extremely negative impacts of this policy.

If you would like to also send a letter to MPs on this issue, please feel free to include the points attached below

Points you might like to raise:

- Direction 62, in effect from 19 December 2013, means that any family visa application already submitted to the Department of Immigration and Border Protection by a refugee who arrived by boat, will no longer be processed.
- The impact of this Direction is devastating. Many refugees living in Australia have been waiting for years in the hope that they may be able to secure a visa for their immediate family.
- Many of the families of refugees in Australia continue to live in dangerous conditions in their home or neighbouring countries. This Direction leaves them in these dangerous situations.
- Many refugees in Australia have spent thousands of dollars in application fees to the Department to secure a family visa. They have also spent thousands of dollars in fees to migration agents to prepare their applications, fees for medical examinations that their families are required to have, and many have also had to pay for DNA tests. They are not entitled to get any of this back.
- The Australian Government has now closed off the only remaining way for refugees who arrived by boat to get their immediate families safely to Australia.
- You might like to include a personal story, if appropriate, to illustrate the devastating effects of this policy.
- Rather than deterring people from getting on boats, Direction 62 increases the likelihood that women and children will take potentially dangerous journeys to try to find safety. This was clearly shown in the last decade after the Howard Government introduced temporary protection visas for refugees who arrived by boat. These visas did not allow them to apply to get their families here safely. In the two years following the introduction of temporary visas, numbers of women and children on boats arriving to Australia escalated.
- Refugees accepted by Australia should not be prevented from having their family visa applications considered just because they arrived by boat.
- Ask the MP to raise this issue with the Minister for Immigration and do all they can to change this policy.

Many thanks and please feel free to forward this on to others.

Caroline Fleay and Lisa Hartley