

Building a better refugee policy: Kaldor Centre Principles outline reform for long-term success

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- **Leading non-partisan research centre delivers a fact-backed roadmap for pragmatic, principled refugee and asylum policy**
- **Real-world examples of how, and why, Australia can benefit from a more humane, sustainable and manageable approach**

UNSW's Andrew & Renata Kaldor Centre for International Refugee Law has set out an independent, non-partisan, fact-backed refugee policy agenda, challenging policymakers and the public to reimagine Australia's current approach, so that both refugees and the nation can prosper amid today's real global challenges.

Set out in a comprehensive paper launched by UNSW Chancellor David Gonski AC on 13 June, the **Kaldor Centre Principles for Australian Refugee Policy** are grounded in evidence and informed by good practices from other countries, as well as from Australia's past. They provide real-world examples of how, and why, Australia can develop a more humane, sustainable and manageable approach.

'A successful refugee policy not only manages national borders but also protects people who need safety, and demonstrates leadership in meeting the global challenge of displacement,' says Professor Jane McAdam, Director of the Kaldor Centre, the world's leading research centre dedicated to the study of international refugee law. 'It is both principled and pragmatic.'

Professor McAdam is confident that Australia can achieve this, because we've done it before. We have a rich history of welcoming refugees since 1945, and we can draw on our prior experiences – as well as good, current practices from overseas – to create a more positive, long-term approach.

The [Kaldor Centre Principles for Australian Refugee Policy](#) are also distilled into [Key Priorities](#) for concrete action. Together, the Principles and Priorities provide a practical roadmap for enduring success in reforming Australia's laws affecting people seeking asylum:

First, comply with our international legal commitments and do not send people back to harm, giving each person seeking asylum a chance to fully present their claim.

Second, provide humane, fair reception conditions, rather than detaining people, particularly children. Australia arguably has the most restrictive detention policy in the world, and this, combined with offshore processing, costs billions of dollars that could be redirected towards more effective and humane alternatives.

Third, give people a fair hearing, in contrast to the current ‘fast-track’ procedure, which discriminates against certain refugees and lacks procedural safeguards. People should be provided with support to present their claims, decreasing the likelihood of appeals and increasing efficiency. A more transparent system would also promote greater public confidence in decision-making.

Fourth, keep families together and safeguard the best interests of children, including by appointing an independent guardian for unaccompanied children, and restoring family reunion rights for all refugees. Children should not be separated from their parents.

Fifth, create additional safe, lawful pathways to protection, which is in the interests both of government and refugees. Most people want to move safely and lawfully, and most governments want to know who has entered their territory and why.

Sixth, be a global and regional leader on protection, including by expanding our resettlement program and by actively promoting protection and solutions within the Asia-Pacific region and globally.

Seventh, invest in refugees for long-term success, by abolishing temporary protection, which hinders refugees’ ability to move forward in their lives, and by supporting refugees’ education and skills, enabling them to contribute to their own well-being and that of their families and community.

‘Adopting the Kaldor Centre’s key priorities would be a significant step forward in showing that Australia really is a country where everyone gets a fair go,’ says Professor McAdam.

Professor Guy S Goodwin-Gill, the Centre’s Deputy Director, said: ‘Australia’s recent politically polarising asylum policies have weakened social cohesion in our communities, decreased our credibility internationally, and demonstrated a head-in-the-sand failure to address the growing number of displaced people worldwide. Even worse, they have failed to provide humane, lasting solutions for people in desperate need of protection.’

‘Good public policy must address real concerns in our community as well as real needs in our world; to achieve that in Australia’s refugee policy, we need to re-examine what works, what kind of society we are, and what we want to be. The Kaldor Centre’s Principles can help us to achieve just that.’

Available for download:

[Kaldor Centre Principles for Australia’s Refugee Policy](#), a comprehensive report that delineates the legal issues and relevant research underpinning each recommendation.

[Summary with Key Priorities](#) for legislative and policy action.

For interviews with Professor Jane McAdam, Kaldor Centre Director, or **Professor Guy S Goodwin-Gill**, Kaldor Centre Deputy Director, please contact Lauren Martin / 0407 393 070 lauren.martin@unsw.edu.au.

The Andrew & Renata Kaldor Centre for International Refugee Law at UNSW Sydney is the world’s leading research centre dedicated to the study of international refugee law. The Centre was founded in October 2013 to undertake rigorous research and contribute to public policy involving the most pressing displacement issues in Australia, the Asia-Pacific region and the world.