Never Stand Still
Law
Andrew & Renata Kaldor Centre for International Refugee Law

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Welcome

We have just celebrated our first year, and what a year it has been! We have been very busy with our research, submissions to parliamentary inquiries, events, media and community outreach. This newsletter provides an update of our activities since mid-2014. We hope you enjoy reading about our work.

People

Arrivals

The Centre is delighted to welcome Madeline Gleeson, who joined us in September as a Research Associate. Madeline graduated from UNSW with First Class Honours in Law and International Studies in 2010, and completed her Masters in International Law at the Graduate Institute in Geneva in 2014, focusing on international refugee law. Her studies there were supported by a prestigious Sir John Monash scholarship. Madeline has previously undertaken work for the UN High Commissioner for Refugees in Geneva, the Jesuit Refugee Service in Cambodia, and the International Catholic Migration Commission in Geneva.

Departures

It is with sadness that the Centre farewells Dr Joyce Chia, our Senior Research Associate. Joyce has been instrumental in developing extensive research and stakeholder networks, in supervising interns and volunteers, in monitoring bills before Parliament (of which there have been many this year), in assisting the media with inquiries, and in ensuring the smooth operation of many Centre activities. We thank Joyce for her commitment, professionalism and teamwork, and wish her very well in her future endeavours.
Interns

‘This semester I completed an internship at the Andrew & Renata Kaldor Centre for International Refugee Law. It was an amazing opportunity that enabled me to bring my social policy and casework experience with asylum seekers in Australia, and translate this into research and evidence based knowledge production with the Kaldor Centre.

I have had such diverse opportunities throughout the internship: from drafting factsheets on refugee status determination in Thailand, to helping compile a report for the United Nations Committee against Torture’s Periodic Review of Australia’s record on its obligations under the Convention against Torture, to attending Professor Jane McAdam and Fiona Chong’s book launch, to assisting with the Kaldor Centre’s conference, and of course, keeping abreast of the constantly changing legislative landscape that is Australian refugee law at present. Meeting Professor Guy Goodwin-Gill, one of the world’s top international refugee law experts, was also a wonderful highlight of the internship.

The Kaldor Centre team are such an inspiring and committed group of researchers who not only made me feel part of the team from day one, but also tailored the internship to meet the needs of each student. My passion for refugee law has been broadened by the experience and I look forward to seeing the accomplishments of each of the staff as the Kaldor Centre grows in the coming years.’

Alice Pailthorpe
Social Justice Intern
Semester 2, 2014

‘I have just completed my semester-long internship at the Andrew & Renata Kaldor Centre for International Law. This internship gave me with the opportunity to expand my understanding of how international refugee law is applied and understood in a domestic context.

Throughout the semester, I was exposed to a wide range of projects that represented the diverse nature of the work undertaken by the Centre. These projects included researching the economic and social costs of Australia’s asylum seeker policies, drafting a submission to the Committee against Torture in regards to Australia’s adherence to the principle of non-refoulement, assisting with the Centre’s new website through the editing and drafting of content, and perhaps most unexpectedly engaging with high school students as part of Global Dignity Day. When viewed altogether, the many varied projects I was exposed to during my internship represent the breadth and diversity of work undertaken by the Centre.

I am so grateful for the opportunity to work alongside and learn from the dedicated and hardworking staff of the Kaldor Centre and I hope to remain involved with the Centre in the future.’

Nicholas Newlands
Social Justice Intern
Semester 2, 2014

Volunteers

Thank you to all our volunteers this year.

In particular, we would like to acknowledge Jackson Wherrett, who volunteered at the Centre from June to September. Jackson, a recent graduate from Sydney Law School, provided substantive research and social media support, especially in relation to the litigation before the High Court involving 157 Tamil asylum seekers held at sea.

Special thanks also to Monica Gong who volunteered with the Centre from August to November. Monica’s help with both research and administration at the Centre was much appreciated.
60 years ago, Australia ratified the Refugee Convention. It was, in fact, this act which brought the treaty into force. Since that time, Australian governments have oscillated in their responses to the reception, treatment and protection of asylum seekers and refugees, ranging from generosity and understanding, through to intolerance and deterrence.

The Kaldor Centre’s first annual conference provided an opportunity to consider how previous Australian governments have sought to balance Australia’s obligations under international law with anxieties about spontaneous arrivals of asylum seekers, and to consider how Australia might offer principled protection into the future.

Professor Guy S Goodwin-Gill from the University of Oxford presented the keynote address. He argued that:

If Australia is seriously interested in a workable and long-lasting response to the challenges of refugee and forced migration, then, in my view, it will need to abandon unilateralism in favour of collaboration; to recognize the equal sovereign status of those partners in the region which have also to deal with those challenges; to recognize that exceptionalism where direct arrivals are concerned cannot be justified in law or on principle; to make protection and solutions the cornerstone of its asylum and resettlement policies; and to implement its international obligations in good faith, including its duty to ensure and to protect the human rights of everyone within its territory or subject to its jurisdiction, authority or control. Above all, if it is to become serious about co-operation, then Australia will need to show its commitment to international law, to the principles which I have laid out, and to others too, such as transparency and accountability.

Other speakers were: Allan Asher, Former Commonwealth Immigration Ombudsman and Chair of the Foundation for Effective Markets and Governance; Admiral (Ret’d) Chris Barrie AC, Former Chief of the Australian Defence Force and Visiting Fellow, ANU Strategic and Defence Studies Centre; Professor Mary Crock, Sydney Law School; Associate Professor Michelle Foster, Melbourne Law School; Professor Graeme Hugo, University of Adelaide; Dr Claire Higgins, Research Associate at the Kaldor Centre; Professor Walter Kälin, University of Berne and Former Member of the UN Human Rights Committee; Kelley Loper, Hong Kong University; and Emeritus Professor Gillian Triggs, President, Australian Human Rights Commission.

The Year in Review

Professor Jane McAdam opened the Kaldor Centre’s first annual conference with some reflections about refugee law and policy in 2014. The following is an extract of her speech.

Over the past year, Operation Sovereign Borders has continued to raise real possibilities of Australia violating its obligations under international refugee law, international human rights law, and the law of the sea. The lack of transparency about ‘on water’ matters, including information about whether boats exist, have been intercepted or pushed back, and the details of how such operations have been conducted, makes a considered assessment of individual cases very challenging. What can be said for certain, though, is that legislative attempts to quarantine domestic law and policy from Australia’s international legal obligations cannot relieve Australia of those obligations as a matter of international law, and Australia will remain liable under international law for any violations that do occur.

There are currently three bills under consideration by Parliament proposing significant changes to Australia’s asylum laws. Together, they are a bald attempt to oust the rule of law by limiting parliamentary oversight of increasingly discretionary powers vested in one person (the Immigration Minister), and by trampling on the courts’ already limited ability to scrutinize domestic law in light of international law.

Their overall effect is twofold: first, to stop asylum seekers from ever reaching Australia by boat through extraordinary powers to intercept, detain and push back at sea, and even send them to a country with which Australia has no agreement and which may not accept them; and secondly, to make it increasingly difficult for those who are here to claim protection in accordance with Australia’s obligations under international refugee and human rights law.

Asylum seekers in Australia still waiting to be processed will have their claims fast-tracked, and merits review curtailed. Protection will be denied to anyone thought to have come on false documents; and complementary protection will either be abolished – or, at the very least, the threshold will be raised, such that a person will have to show that they are more likely than not to face a real risk of torture or other ill-treatment if removed (that is, a more than 50 per cent chance of harm). Powers to refuse or to cancel a visa on character grounds will be broadened. And procedural changes will create presumptions against asylum seekers in a complex process that is already weighted in favour of the government. All of these reforms come on top of the abolition earlier this year of funded legal assistance for asylum seekers who arrived by boat.

Together, these changes will make it much easier for a decision-maker to refuse protection, which in turn creates a real risk of Australia breaching its international obligations. Indeed, the Parliamentary Joint Committee on Human Rights, a body comprised of Coalition, Labor and Greens Senators which examines proposed legislation against Australia’s international legal commitments, could not find a single element of the bill that was clearly compatible with Australia’s international human rights obligations.

Part of the impetus behind the government's proposed legislative changes is the asylum case currently before the High Court, relating to 157 asylum seekers intercepted and held at sea for a month earlier this year. While the proposed bill cannot affect the outcome in that particular case, it may effectively mean that the judgment has no future impact because the statutory basis for the arguments has been changed.

Finally, a reflection on 2014 would be incomplete without mentioning Australia’s deal with Cambodia to resettle recognized refugees from our offshore processing centres. Described by the UN High Commissioner for Refugees, Antonio Guterres, as ‘a worrying departure from international norms’, the deal is a classic case of responsibility-shifting not responsibility-sharing. It is not about capacity-building, or regional co-operation, or investment in Cambodia’s future. Rather, it is a quick-fix response to a manufactured political problem in Australia.

Read the full address online at: www.kaldorcentre.unsw.edu.au/Conference2014.
**Legislative Developments**

Dr Joyce Chia

The Parliament of Australia has been very active this year in considering refugee-related legislation. In the second half of this year, the Government introduced three refugee and migration-related bills into Parliament, the most significant of which was the Migration and Maritime Powers Legislation Amendment (Resolving the Asylum Legacy Caseload) Bill 2014. This bill was passed after lengthy negotiations with the crossbenchers on 5 December 2014.

The bill introduces temporary protection visas, re-defines the meaning of ‘refugee’ in Australian law, empowers the Minister for Immigration to detain and transfer people on the high seas in breach of the principle of non-refoulement, and restricts or remove merits review for many asylum seekers. The bill received significant attention by advocates, with over 5700 submissions received. The Kaldor Centre made a submission with Associate Professor Michelle Foster of Melbourne Law School, who gave evidence before the committee on 14 November 2014. The Senate Legal and Constitutional Affairs Committee tabled its report on 24 November recommending the bill be passed, with dissenting reports by Labor and the Greens.

The Parliament also passed a bill extending the ability of the Minister to refuse or cancel visas on character grounds (the Migration Amendment (Character and General Visa Cancellation) Bill 2014). This bill was supported by the Government and the Labor Opposition. There is also a bill before Parliament that seeks to extend the Minister’s powers to refuse or cancel citizenship (the Australian Citizenship and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2014). The Senate Legal and Affairs Committee has tabled its report on this bill, which is opposed by Labor and the Greens.

In addition, the Kaldor Centre made a submission and presented evidence in relation to the Migration Amendment (Protection and Other Measures Bill) 2014, which proposes a raft of changes to Australia’s refugee determination system, including raising the risk threshold for complementary protection. This bill was presented to the Senate together with the legacy caseload bill, but the Senate did not have time to consider it before the final sitting day this year.

The Kaldor Centre also joined with others in making submissions in relation to two bills proposed by the Greens. The Kaldor Centre, together with Associate Professor Michelle Foster, made a submission to the Senate Legal and Constitutional Affairs Committee on the Migration Amendment (Protecting Babies Born in Australia) Bill 2014, which would deem a baby born in Australia to irregular asylum seekers not to be an ‘unauthorised maritime arrival’. The Committee’s report is due by 19 February 2014. The Kaldor Centre joined with the UNSW Human Rights Clinic in making a brief submission to the Guardian for Unaccompanied Children Bill 2014, based on an earlier submission to the Australian Human Rights Commission’s inquiry into children in detention. The Senate Committee’s report on this bill is due by 5 February 2014.

**United Nations Committee against Torture: Periodic Review**

Madeline Gleeson

In November, Australia appeared before the United Nations Committee against Torture in Geneva to discuss its implementation of the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (the Torture Convention). In anticipation of lengthy questioning about Australia’s asylum seeker and refugee policies, the Kaldor Centre live-tweeted the sessions in their entirety.

The Committee’s main focus was Australia’s refugee policies. It expressed serious concerns about mandatory detention, the detention and treatment of child asylum seekers, the lack of transparency in Australia’s activities relating to asylum seekers, asylum seekers’ lack of access to legal support, new legislative proposals to change the standard of proof in complementary protection claims (including based on the Torture Convention), conditions in detention and the length of processing times in Nauru and Papua New Guinea, reports of child sexual abuse in Nauru, the new Code of Behaviour for asylum seekers, the recent ‘processing’ at sea and return of Sri Lankan asylum seekers, the indefinite detention of stateless people, the use and level of training of private contractors in detention centres, and reports that Australian workers and organizations involved in immigration detention are contractually prohibited from speaking against the Australian government. The Committee appeared to be very familiar with the new laws which
have introduced dramatic changes to Australia’s treatment of asylum seekers and refugees, and asked lengthy questions about their proposed application.

Despite the emphasis placed on these issues by the Committee, however, the Australian delegation’s responses to the matters raised were limited. The delegation, including representatives from the Department of Immigration and Border Protection and the Attorney-General’s Department, argued that Australia’s laws and policies are consistent with its interpretation of its international obligations, and that issues arising in relation to asylum seekers in Nauru and Papua New Guinea are matters for those countries alone. Despite insistence from the Committee that it was ‘not convincing’ for Australia to deny any responsibility for asylum seekers in Nauru and Papua New Guinea, and that Australia’s interpretation of its obligations differed from strict and settled international jurisprudence, Australia informed the Committee that they would have to ‘agree to disagree’.

The Centre’s Twitter coverage of the sessions was widely shared and commented on, and was published in a Storify record of the sessions: https://storify.com/KaldorCentre.

The Committee released its concluding observations on Australia on 28 November 2014. The observations reiterate the Committee’s extensive concerns about Australia’s respect for non-refoulement, mandatory immigration detention (including of children), offshore processing of asylum claims in Nauru and Papua New Guinea, and the identification of victims of torture among asylum seekers. The Committee’s concluding observations are available at: http://tbinternet.ohchr.org/Treaties/CAT/Shared%20Documents/AUS/CAT_C_AUS_CO_4-5_18888_E.pdf

Old and New Directions in Canadian Refugee Policy: Lessons for Australia?

Dr Claire Higgins

From the early 1970s to 2011, the Canadian government maintained mechanisms and programs for in-country processing. It enabled people in refugee-like situations, but who had not yet fled, to be processed within their countries of origin – such as Argentina, Chile and El Salvador – and resettled in Canada.

In September, I travelled to Toronto and Ottawa to learn more about how in-country processing was administered. I met with former senior immigration officials who designed the program, as well as former immigration officials who travelled across Latin America to interview political prisoners and dissidents for resettlement. While in Toronto, I also presented a paper on current Australian asylum policy at York University’s Centre for Refugee Studies.

During my trip, I learnt about the ‘New Directions Initiative’, established by Canada’s former Director General of Refugee Affairs, Mike Molloy (now at the University of Ottawa), Professor Howard Adelman of York University and Professor Naomi Albiom of Queen’s University. Inspired by Canada’s response to the Indochinese refugee crisis in the 1970–80s, the Initiative is focused on developing greater opportunities for private sponsorship of refugees, and finding ways to use the refugee program to fill labour market shortages in sectors that ordinarily depend on Canada’s Temporary Foreign Workers Program.

During the first half of 2014, Mr Molloy and Professors Adelman and Albiom travelled around Canada to consult with provincial governments, refugee advocates, regional business representatives and other stakeholders to investigate ways in which Canada’s refugee resettlement program could be enhanced and improved. The Initiative has been discussed in Canadian media as a possible means of enabling the government to increase the number of resettlement places set aside for Syrian refugees.
A Snapshot of Centre Events

Launch of Beyond the Boats: Building an Asylum and Refugee Policy for the Long Term (5 November 2014)

The Kaldor Centre, in partnership with Australia21 and the Centre for Policy Development, ran a high-level expert roundtable in July at Parliament House, Canberra to discuss a long-term framework for Australia’s asylum seeker policy. The goal was to restart the national conversation on asylum, and to consider how Australia might facilitate a sustainable immigration policy that balances protection, safety, transparency and prosperity. The roundtable brought together 35 people, including members of the ALP, Coalition and the Greens.

On 5 November, the roundtable report was launched by the Hon Fred Chaney AO, Senior Australian of the Year, at Parliament House, Canberra. Mr Chaney said that: ‘This is a highly politicized issue and I think change needs to come from the community’. ‘You have to look for serious well-regarded community voices to explain that it is in our self interest to manage our refugee policy in a different way’, he explained. ‘The larger issues relating to the worldwide refugee crisis also need acceptance. That will only occur through new non-partisan conversations in the community.’

Key recommendations of the report include increasing Australia’s humanitarian intake, phasing out mandatory detention (apart from initial screening), and establishing a regional Track II dialogue.

The report can be found online at: www.kaldorcentre.unsw.edu.au/Beyond_The_Boats_Report.

Seminar Protecting People on the Move in the Context of Disasters and Climate Change (4 November 2014)

How does the law respond to people displaced by the impacts of natural disasters or climate change? How might governments protect and assist people before they are forced to move? And what sorts of opportunities might be created to enable people to migrate before disaster strikes?

These issues were considered at a recent seminar hosted by the Centre. The speakers were Professor Walter Kälin, envoy of the Chairmanship of the Nansen Initiative on Disaster-Induced Cross-Border Displacement and Professor of Law, University of Berne; Bruce Burson, independent expert and member of the Nansen Initiative Consultative Committee; and Professor Jane McAdam, Kaldor Centre Director and member of the Nansen Initiative Consultative Committee. The event was chaired by Centre member Tamara Wood.

The Nansen Initiative was established in late 2012 as a State-led, bottom-up consultative process led by the governments of Norway and Switzerland. Through a series of regional consultations, it aims to build consensus on the development of a protection agenda addressing the needs of people displaced across borders in the context of disasters and climate change.

The panel examined each of the three types of movement of concern to the Nansen Initiative – displacement, migration and planned relocation – to identify how, why and when people may move in response to disasters and the impacts of climate change, and what legal and policy frameworks are needed to support such movement.

A video of the event is available online at: www.kaldorcentre.unsw.edu.au/NansenPanel.
Global Dignity Day (24 October 2014)

The Kaldor Centre was delighted to host the second-ever Australian Global Dignity Day.

Global Dignity Day gives school students the opportunity to reflect on how we can all lead dignified lives. It is the brainchild of three friends who met as Young Global Leaders at the World Economic Forum: HRH Crown Prince Haakon (Norway), Professor Pekka Himanen (Finland) and founder of Operation HOPE, John Hope Bryant (United States). Kaldor Centre Director, Jane McAdam, is Australia’s Global Dignity Day Country Chair.

This year, we invited 165 students from 80 high schools across Sydney and surrounding areas to NSW Parliament House. Professor Ron McCallum AO gave an inspiring keynote speech, in which he talked about his own experiences, his work with people with disabilities (including refugees with disabilities), and the relationship between dignity and the law. Students then moved into small groups to explore the concept of dignity and to think of ways of disseminating the idea within their schools.

Professor McCallum was the first blind person to be appointed to a full professorship at an Australian university. He was the foundation Blake Dawson Waldron Professor in Industrial Law at Sydney University, and Dean of the Faculty of Law there for five years. In 2009, he was appointed to the United Nations Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, serving as its Chairperson from 2010–13 and currently as Vice-Chairperson. He became an Officer in the Order of Australia in 2006, and was honoured as Senior Australian of the Year in 2011.

‘I learnt the fundamental aspects of dignity and what it is... I learn about what it means to be who you are, and be loved and respected as you are by others, through the personal stories shared’, said one participant at Global Dignity Day.

Global Dignity Days are held in over 40 countries, and the Honorary Board includes Richard Branson, President Martti Ahtisaari and Archbishop Desmond Tutu.

Our Global Dignity Day was kindly sponsored by Good Super.

Book launch: Refugees: Why Seeking Asylum Is Legal and Australia’s Policies Are Not by Jane McAdam and Fiona Chong (4 September 2014)

In launching Refugees: Why Seeking Asylum Is Legal and Australia’s Policies Are Not (UNSW Press, 2014), the former Chief of the Australian Defence Force, retired Admiral Chris Barrie, described Australia’s asylum seeker policies as ‘a mess’, reflecting badly on all Australians. He criticised Operation Sovereign Borders and the processing of asylum seekers as ‘outrageously expensive for a country that was built on immigration’, and called for better leadership on the issue.

Jane McAdam and Fiona Chong wrote Refugees to debunk some of the myths and misunderstandings about refugees and asylum seekers that have taken hold in the community. The book seeks to provide a straightforward and balanced account of Australia’s asylum policies in light of international law. Written for a general audience, the book explains who asylum seekers and refugees are, what the law is, and what policies like offshore processing, mandatory detention, and turning back boats mean in practice.

Publications & Media (July–December 2014)

Books


Reports


Book chapters


Refereed academic articles

Jane McAdam, ‘Historical Cross-Border Relocations in the Pacific: Lessons for Planned Relocations in the Context of Climate Change’ (2014) 49 *Journal of Pacific History* 301

Non-refereed articles


Academic/professional conferences and presentations

Jane McAdam, Guest speaker, ‘Where We Are, the Law and Use of Language’, UNHCR Annual Consultations with Australian Civil Society (18–19 November 2014)


Jane McAdam, ‘The Year in Review’, Andrew & Renata Kaldor Centre for International Refugee Law Annual Conference (3 November 2014)

Joyce Chia, Guest speaker, ‘Australian refugee policy: Where are we now and where are we going’, University of Tasmania (8 October 2014)

Claire Higgins, Guest speaker, ‘The cost and controversy of Operation Sovereign Borders’, Centre for Refugee Studies, York University, Toronto (1 October 2014)

Jane McAdam, Guest speaker, ‘The Refugee Debate in Australia: Alternative Perspectives’ (with Julian Burnside), NSW Bar Association (19 August 2014)

Jane McAdam, Address, ‘Climate-Induced Displacement: A Refugee or a Migration Issue?’, Department of Immigration and Border Protection, Canberra (19 August 2014)


Jane McAdam, ‘Rethinking the Origins of Persecution in Refugee Law’, Australian and NZ Society of International Law Conference, Canberra (3 July 2014)

Community/student engagement and presentations


Joyce Chia, Guest lecture, University of Tasmania Administrative Law lecture (8 October 2014)

Jane McAdam, Public lecture and book promotion, University of the Third Age, Bowral (29 September 2014)

Jane McAdam, Public lecture and book promotion, Rural Australians for Refugees, Braidwood (28 September 2014)

Jane McAdam, Public lecture and book promotion, Rural Australians for Refugees, Queanbeyan (27 September 2014)

Jane McAdam, Q&A with Quentin Dempster on Refugees: Why Seeking Asylum Is Legal and Australia’s Policies Are Not, Gleebooks, Sydney (24 September 2014)

Jane McAdam, Guest speaker, University of Western Sydney Golden Key Intellectual Engagement Event on Refugees (18 September 2014)

Jane McAdam, Guest speaker and book promotion, Eltham Books, Victoria (17 September 2014)

Joyce Chia, Guest speaker, Politics in the Pub (11 September 2014)

Jane McAdam, Scientia Distinguished Speaker Series Address, UNSW (3 September 2014)

Jane McAdam, Public lecture on Refugees and Asylum in Australia, Goulburn (10 July 2014)

Media: television

Jane McAdam, Interview on ABC News 24 with Tony Eastley (8 July 2014)

Joyce Chia, Interview on The World, ABC News (10 July 2014)

Joyce Chia, ‘High Court ruling could redefine our democracy’, The Drum (9 July 2014)

Media: radio

Jane McAdam, Interview on ABC Radio National Breakfast with Fran Kelly (2 December 2014)

Jane McAdam, ‘Calls for action on environmental refugees’, Interview on SBS World News (26 September 2014)

Jane McAdam, Interview on ABC Radio National Breakfast with Fran Kelly (26 September 2014)

Jane McAdam, Interview on 2CH with Kel Richards (21 September 2014)

Jane McAdam, Interview on ABC Classic FM with Margaret Throsby (15 September 2014)

Jane McAdam, Interview in Final Draft 2SER FM 107.3 (13 September 2014)

Jane McAdam, Interview on ABC 702 Mornings with Linda Mottram (11 September 2014)

Jane McAdam, ‘Pacific Islanders reject ‘climate change’ refugee status, want to ‘migrate with dignity’, SIDS conference hears’, ABC Radio Australia (6 September 2014)

Jane McAdam, Interview on ABC Radio PM with Mark Colvin (4 September 2014)

Jane McAdam, Interview on ABC Radio Drive with Waleed Aly (22 July 2014)

Jane McAdam, Interview on Radio Adelaide Breakfast (11 July 2014)

Jane McAdam, Interview on 2SER (10 July 2014)
For easy-to-read factsheets on a range of refugee issues, please visit our website.

The Centre website features a series of short videos which address various aspects of refugee law.

The Centre produces a weekly email alert of Australian and international refugee news and commentary. Join the mailing list via our website.

The Andrew & Renata Kaldor Centre for International Refugee Law at UNSW is the world’s first research centre dedicated to the study of international refugee law. It was established in October 2013 through the generosity of Andrew Kaldor AM and Renata Kaldor AO, motivated by their deep concern about Australia’s treatment of refugees and asylum seekers.

Through high-quality research feeding into public policy debate and legislative reform, the Centre brings a principled, human rights-based approach to the issue of refugee law and policy in Australia. It provides an independent space to connect academics, policymakers and NGOs, and creates an important bridge between scholarship and practice. It also provides thought leadership in the community through public engagement and community outreach.