

**Scholarship.
Independence.
Thought-leadership.
Human rights.
Collaboration.
Representation.**

2021–28:

A strategic framework
for the Kaldor Centre for
International Refugee Law



UNSW
SYDNEY



Kaldor Centre for
International
Refugee Law

We will

answer the big questions,
inform public debate and
connect and resource others

to generate lawful,
sustainable and humane
solutions to displacement.

A message from the Director

The Kaldor Centre for International Refugee Law was established in 2013 to inject rigorous, evidence-based research into an increasingly divisive and misinformed debate about people seeking asylum, refugees and other forced migrants. Based at the Faculty of Law & Justice at UNSW Sydney, we are the world's first centre dedicated to the study of international refugee law. Our cutting-edge research drives real change.

We are recognised as a global powerhouse on refugee law and policy. We directly influence new policy frameworks and operational responses at the national, regional and international levels to strengthen protection for displaced people. We are a trusted resource for policymakers, civil society, lawyers, journalists and the public – from the most senior UN officials in Geneva through to school students in Australia.

In an era of uncertainty and mistrust, the Kaldor Centre provides an essential voice of reason in debates about human rights, displacement, migration and human mobility. As a world leader in refugee law and forced migration studies, we connect a strong network of partners across academia, policy and practice. We provide an unrivalled environment

for the training and mentoring of the next generation of scholars in forced migration, equipping them with the skills to address the challenges of our time. We are committed to supporting and amplifying the work of scholars who have themselves experienced displacement.

As the Kaldor Centre marks its first seven years of impact, we wish to set an ambitious agenda for the next seven years. This document sets out our strategic intent for this period. Drawing on lessons learned since our inception, this strategic framework enables us to be focused in our purpose and goals, but sufficiently agile to respond to emerging challenges. It guides our more detailed operational planning and is accompanied by a separate set of clear performance indicators against which we will assess our progress and impact.

Building on our strong reputation, networks and track record of international thought-leadership, we will continue to generate the clear, rigorous and solutions-oriented thinking needed to confront one of the world's most complex challenges.

Scientia Professor Jane McAdam
Director, Kaldor Centre for
International Refugee Law

Our context

Forced migration is a matter of global concern, yet governments' responses to people on the move are increasingly marked by restrictive and nationalistic approaches. Widening inequality, discrimination and limits on movement – especially during the COVID-19 pandemic – have highlighted the challenges of mobility and immobility alike.

Governments have undertaken extraordinary measures to limit the movement of both citizens and non-citizens, with little oversight or accountability for the rights of stranded populations. As contemporary crises interlock and compound, more people worldwide are likely to be trapped or displaced by the impacts of poverty, conflict, disasters, pandemics, resource scarcity and climate change.

As the challenge of displacement grows ever more complex and divisive, the need for our work has never been greater.

Our 2021–28 strategic framework has been developed with this complexity front of mind. It articulates our mission, values and goals, and provides a clear-eyed direction to our work. It enables us to undertake the deep, long-term thinking required to drive reform, while remaining responsive to emerging developments. It draws on lessons learned from our first seven years to ensure our work is effective in tackling the challenges to come.

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Our purpose

The Kaldor Centre's mission is to develop and promote lawful, sustainable and humane solutions for, and with, refugees and other forced migrants.

The Centre provides a principled, independent voice on refugee law and forced migration, generating high-quality research that informs public debate, policy and law reform.

Acting as a bridge between scholarship, policy and practice, we connect, resource and collaborate with others in the field to develop rights-based solutions.

We cultivate and empower future thought-leaders, including through partnering with scholars who have themselves experienced displacement.

Our vision

Our vision is a world where refugees and other forced migrants:

- are protected, respected and heard;
- can live in safety, with dignity, and without discrimination;
- can enjoy their full range of rights enshrined in international law; and
- can meaningfully participate in all spheres of research and decision-making that affect them.

Our values

Scholarship

We embrace scholarly excellence and rigorous analysis as the foundation of all of our work.

Independence

We are non-partisan and value academic integrity.

Thought-leadership

We shape and inform public policy debates on forced migration and cultivate thought-leaders of the future.

Human rights

We are driven by a commitment to human rights and the rule of law, which we believe are essential to good governance and social cohesion, from the local to the international levels.

Collaboration

We foster an environment of mutual respect, teamwork and cooperation, both within and outside the Centre, including through partnerships with other academics, organisations, policymakers and people with lived experience of displacement.

Representation

We work to ensure that a diversity of voices is heard and meaningfully incorporated into research, policy and practice relating to refugee law and forced migration. We actively listen to, partner with and support scholars with lived experience of displacement.

2013–20: Our lessons learned

The lessons we have learned over the past seven years will inform our priorities as we look ahead. Our track record of impact provides a strong foundation for achieving our ambitious vision for the next seven years.

Researchers can play a unique role in the forced migration policy 'eco-system'.

Consistent feedback shows that our ability to provide authoritative analysis of new developments, and to undertake deep, long-term thinking about solutions, makes a valued contribution to the work of civil society, legal practitioners and policymakers alike. Our role as independent, non-partisan experts enables us to maintain a dialogue with key actors across the political spectrum, cementing our position of trust and influence.

Evidence is important, but stories matter too.

Facts alone are not enough to change minds. They need to be connected to human stories and values. We have drawn on these lessons by developing a positive narrative for an alternative Australian refugee policy in the *Kaldor Centre Principles for Australian Refugee Policy*, setting out a roadmap to a shared future in which both refugees and the nation can prosper. Our award-winning digital storytelling project, *Temporary*, showed that by combining refugee stories with accessible legal explanations, we could open people's eyes to the impact of complex asylum policies and motivate them to take action for real change.

It's vital to set the historical record straight.

Holding lawmakers to account for their international obligations can help to stop bad laws in their tracks, even if the prevailing policy environment does not provide opportunities for broader law reform. Where politics hampers rights-oriented progress, it is critical to ensure there is a clear public record of account. Such efforts reinforce expectations of parliamentary transparency and accountability, and help to inform media reporting on forced migration.

Threats to rights anywhere are threats to rights everywhere.

The erosion of one country's respect for international law and refugee protection lowers the bar globally. What we do here is of global significance: our detailed scrutiny of Australia's unlawful practices can help to avert copycat policies overseas.

We're stronger together.

We can achieve a lot on our own, but we can achieve even more when we collaborate with others. Strategic partnerships with scholars, policymakers, legal practitioners, international organisations, civil society and refugee-led organisations can deepen our work and broaden our impact. Together, we can leverage our collective expertise and networks across the world to drive meaningful change.

We need to do more to support and empower scholars with lived experience of displacement.

Scholars who have experienced displacement face significant barriers in higher education, academia and decision-making fora. We will build upon our Emerging Scholars Network and Displaced Scholars Mentoring Program to create other opportunities for improved access, inclusion and meaningful participation.

2021–28: Our future focus

Our strategic framework for 2021–28 is organised around three key pillars:

Research.

We produce world-leading research that supports the development of lawful, sustainable and humane solutions for people in need of protection.

Engage.

We engage meaningfully to inform public policy debates on refugee law and forced migration.

Connect.

We connect and resource others in the field to help generate rights-based solutions to displacement.

Research:

We produce world-leading research that supports the development of lawful, sustainable and humane solutions for people in need of protection.

1

Our ambitious research program:

- addresses knowledge gaps (conceptual, legal, institutional, operational);
- identifies effective practices on key refugee law and forced migration issues;
- promotes policy and normative development; and
- develops concrete strategies to improve protection, underpinned by international law.

We will:

- **Rethink international protection frameworks** to ensure they are fit for 21st century displacement challenges, including movement in the context of climate change and disasters.
- **Enhance regional protection**, particularly in the Asia-Pacific, through examining protection challenges (including offshore processing, pushbacks and interceptions, and responses to major displacement crises) and accountability mechanisms.
- **Support Australian law and policy reform**, and promote refugee protection in Australia, by examining the legal and historical dimensions of Australia's refugee policy and creating a toolkit of alternative approaches, including complementary pathways to protection.

2

Our research is of the highest quality and is characterised by its:

- sound evidence-based approach;
- intellectual rigour and depth;
- awareness of context, including lived experiences of displacement;
- holistic, interdisciplinary understanding of the subject area;
- historical awareness; and
- comparative approaches.

We will:

- **Produce and publish high-quality scholarly research.**
- **Lead and contribute to collaborative research projects** within our areas of expertise, including through cross-disciplinary approaches and with scholars with lived experience of displacement.
- **Be recognised internationally as scholarly leaders** on law and policy concerning refugees and other forced migrants.

Outstanding research is our engine for impact, enabling us to speak with insight and authority.

As we look ahead, our research agenda will address key questions that will help to advance rights-based solutions in the face of new challenges.

For example, we will generate new research to inform responses to displacement in the context of climate change and disasters, building on our track record of impact in this area. We are already at the forefront of global efforts and actively engaged in key international and regional policy processes, including drafting guidance and toolkits for governments.

We will leverage our world-leading expertise and impact on this issue to work with affected communities, governments and international organisations to develop holistic solutions for people at risk, particularly in the Asia-Pacific. Our 360-degree approach will help develop legal tools that assist communities to adapt to climate change and enable them to move safely out of harm's way if the need arises.

Engage:

We engage meaningfully to inform public policy debates on refugee law and forced migration.

1

Our research is accessible and relevant to domestic, regional and international policymakers, civil society and the general public.

We will:

- **Translate our research** into accessible language and formats.
- **Actively engage** established and new audiences with a creative, strategic approach to content and dissemination.
- **Produce outputs that are meaningful** to, and used by, decision-makers, legal practitioners, international organisations, civil society, refugee-led organisations, the media, students and the general public.
- **Inform and inspire** young people, including school and university students, about issues of refugee law and forced migration.

2

We are a valued resource for domestic, regional and international policymakers seeking solutions to the pressing challenges of forced migration.

We will:

- **Provide expert, non-partisan advice** to policymakers on issues within our expertise.
- **Contribute to the development of policy responses** to forced migration that are consistent with international law and prevent the replication of unlawful practices.

3

We provide a credible, expert voice in public policy debates on refugee law and forced migration.

We will:

- **Grow our reputation for independence and scholarly expertise** in international refugee law and forced migration.
- **Help shape public debates** by maintaining a strong public presence and applying our expertise.

As debates about forced migration become increasingly contentious, our voice of reason is needed more than ever.

We will continue to leverage our reputation as trusted experts to inform and drive principled debate and decision-making.

We will actively foster constructive dialogue with policymakers at home and abroad to advance law and policy reform. We will continue to use our seat at the table to encourage principled and evidence-based policy decisions. For example, we will build upon our highly regarded Policy Brief Series to seize upon and influence opportunities for policy change, linking rigorous analysis of contemporary displacement challenges with clear, actionable recommendations.

Recognising that a better-informed public is critical to promoting change, we will effectively communicate our expertise in creative, compelling and strategic ways. For example, we will leverage our strong media presence, explore innovative ways of making reliable information widely accessible, and highlight the voices of people with lived experience of displacement.

Connect:

We connect and resource others in the field to help generate rights-based solutions to displacement.

1

We adopt a collaborative approach and share our expertise to resource the work of others seeking to promote solutions for people in need of protection.

We will:

- **Provide an independent, accessible, trusted and non-partisan source of expert analysis** that informs the work of civil society.

2

We act as a bridge between scholarship, policy and practice.

We will:

- **Connect people** within and across sectors to encourage collaboration and sharing of knowledge and ideas.

3

We build the capacity of future thought-leaders in forced migration.

We will:

- **Advance the voices of people with lived experience of displacement** within relevant academic and policy fora.
- **Educate the next generation of legal professionals** about refugee law and forced migration through teaching, internships and broader engagement at UNSW and beyond.
- **Provide high-quality supervision** to a growing cadre of higher degree research students.
- **Support the development of early career scholars** in forced migration, particularly in the Asia-Pacific region.

We will catalyse change by bringing people together to share knowledge and generate new insights for better responses to displacement.

Our work will strengthen the capacity of the refugee sector as a whole by resourcing and coordinating with our vast network of scholars, policymakers, legal practitioners, civil society and refugee-led organisations.

We will expand our efforts to nurture the leaders of the future. For instance, we will grow our programs to support scholars with lived experience of displacement, who often face barriers to education and are strongly underrepresented in higher education institutions, both as students and researchers.

We will seek to build upon our peer-mentoring program, which supports scholars with experience of displacement to pursue their academic and professional goals. By expanding on this life-changing initiative, we will empower scholars to fulfil their own potential, and foster the next generation of thought-leaders.

Our enablers

Our work is supported by the key enablers described below. We will invest in them, and monitor their progress, to ensure the success of our strategic framework.

People

We attract and retain a high-performing team that is committed to our values and creates a supportive and collaborative environment.

- **We support the professional development of our team** and create an enabling environment for them to do their best work and deliver our strategy.
- **We grow our team** of researchers, and, as necessary, our professional and technical staff, to pursue our strategic program of work.

Networks and partnerships

We cultivate strong networks across sectors and work effectively with our partners to promote solutions to forced migration.

- **We build and maintain strong domestic, regional and international networks and partnerships** among scholars, policymakers, legal practitioners, international organisations, civil society and refugee-led organisations.

Financial sustainability

We are financially sustainable and use our resources efficiently and effectively.

- **We grow our revenue**, secure longer-term income and manage resources responsibly to ensure that we can continue our work sustainably.

For more information about our work or to discuss partnering with the Kaldor Centre, please contact:

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"This is a centre of excellence that makes a difference in so many ways, not only in the academic field but also down to very concrete examples of differences that are being made for refugee populations.

No other entity has achieved such a catalytic role."

Thomas Albrecht, Regional Representative,
UN High Commissioner for Refugees



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