

# Stop this unjust queue jumping

*The Australian*

*29 June 1978*

*by Dr Moss Cass*

*Opposition Spokesman on Immigration and Ethnic Affairs*

*(transcript)*

The continuing stream of refugee boats arriving in northern Australia poses a problem which the Australian government cannot ignore any longer.

There is no policy covering the Boat People and the problem will not go away by being ignored.

Between April 1976 and January this year 1,037 Boat People arrived in Australia: none were sent back. The implications of a government policy which accepts queue-jumping on this scale are obvious.

The word is out in Indo-China that if you make it to Australia you can expect to gain resident status. Who can blame these people for trying?

Many Australians, however, have already reacted strongly to this continued entry of what they perceive as illegal immigrants.

Unless the situation is handled effectively, we run the risk of a backlash of prejudice against all Indo-Chinese people here, regardless of whether they are legal immigrants, selected refugees or Boat People.

## ***Prejudice***

Australia cannot afford to allow such attitudes to develop. The existence of latent prejudice in our community has been demonstrated recently by the emergence of the Neo-Nazi National Front.

The extremist views of an organisation like this, which wants to save Australia from the "yellow hordes" are abhorrent to the vast majority of Australians and have been condemned.

Despite the small size of such a group, however, the community cannot afford to dismiss it entirely as a lunatic fringe. We must be conscious of the threat that National Front-type views represent to our multicultural society.

So far as the Boat People are concerned, it would not be a solution, and would not be practicable, to just turn the boats away.

Neither is it possible to "send them back," even if that were a morally acceptable option. We cannot expect the Thais and the Malaysians to cope with any more than the hundreds of thousands already languishing in their refugee camps.

And by the very fact of fleeing from Indo-China, for whatever reasons, these people have put themselves at risk of persecution if we forced them to return assuming that the governments concerned would accept them.

Nevertheless, the Boat People should not automatically be accepted for residence in Australia. A token few have been deported but the vast majority have remained, providing clear evidence to those considering the voyage, that Australia will accept them.

### *Persecution*

This is grossly unjust to those people in camps who have obeyed the rules and waited for processing by our immigration officials. Their needs are far greater than many of the Boat People, who frequently arrive carrying assets and have left Vietnam not from fear of political persecution but because they do not like the economic conditions.

Australia must continue to accept for permanent settlement its fair share of refugees, particularly from the nations acting as countries of first asylum. We have a special responsibility to our Asian neighbors to help alleviate the Indo-Chinese refugee problem, not only because of our relative capacity to help but also because of our military involvement in Vietnam.

But those refugees seeking residence in Australia who jump the queue by arriving on our shores without proper authorisation should not be given resident status, even temporarily.

They should be taken in and cared for on a temporary basis in special facilities which Australia could provide for the United Nations, whilst arrangements are made by the UN High Commissioner for refugees for their initial settlement among UN member nations.

in this way Australia would not be seen as automatically accepting all who arrive on our shores and would offer some hope of justice to those still in camps.

*[Note: In March 1982, the term "queue jumper" is first used in the House of Representatives by Ian Macphie, the Minister for Immigration and Ethnic Affairs in the Fraser Government.]*

BY DR. MOSS CASS  
OPPOSITION SPOKESMAN  
ON IMMIGRATION AND  
ETHNIC AFFAIRS

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