



## **Cruelty to Asylum Seekers dressed Up as Compassion is the Scandal that Bedevils Australia**

**Refugee Week 2016 will be held from Sunday June 19 to Saturday June 25. This coincides with World Refugee Day on Friday June 20. Through Refugee Week we aim to provide an important opportunity for asylum seekers and refugees to be seen, listened to and valued. 2016 Theme:**

***‘With courage let us all combine’***

The Refugee Council of Australia has chosen “With courage let us all combine” as the theme for Refugee Week in Australia for 2015 to 2017. Taken from the second verse of the national anthem, the theme celebrates the courage of refugees and of people who speak out against persecution and injustice. It serves as a call for unity and for positive action, encouraging Australians to improve our nation’s welcome for refugees and to acknowledge the skills and energy refugees bring to their new home.

It takes courage to be a refugee: As people who have faced persecution because of who they are (their race, nationality or membership of a persecuted group) or what they believe (their religion or political opinion), refugees need:

- The courage not to deny identity or beliefs in the face of persecution.
- The courage to leave all that is familiar and step into the unknown in search peace.
- The courage to keep going in the face of devastating loss, difficulty and despair.
- The courage to begin again, to work hard and to maintain hope in an unfamiliar land.

It takes courage to out against speak injustice: In a world where refugees experience Persecution in their countries of origin and often face discrimination, difficulty and rejection in places where they seek refuge, speaking out often requires courage. In Refugee Week, we acknowledge and celebrate the dedication and bravery of refugee leaders, advocates and citizens who draw attention to violations of human rights, support people at their time of greatest need and challenge callous indifference to the suffering of others.

A call for unity and action for a fairer society:

The Refugee Week theme encourages Australians to celebrate the best aspects of our nation’s welcome of refugees, frankly acknowledge unjust treatment of asylum seekers and refugees and commit to working together to ensure that we do better. We celebrate the positive contributions to Australian society made over the past 70 years by the 800,000 Australians who once were refugees, taking inspiration from the second verse of Advance Australia Fair.

### **Logo for Refugee Week**

In sharing ideas and strategies, the UK Refugee Week Consortium has given permission for its Refugee Week logo to be used in Australia. The variety of colours in the logo speak of the diversity and energy brought to the welcoming country by refugees from many backgrounds. The logo is available for use by any organisation holding events in conjunction with Refugee Week which conform to the Refugee Week objectives of promoting understanding of refugees and asylum seekers, and celebrating the contributions and achievements of people who have experienced life as a refugee.



## Brian Bilston's 'Refugee' Poem Moves Thousands With Brilliant Hidden Message

*Aubrey Allegretti, The Huffington Post UK, 24 March 2016*

A poet has forced people to re-think their prejudice against refugees with a startling poem highlighting the plight of those fleeing conflict and persecution. Brian Bilston's simply titled 'refugee' verse won praise for recounting the pains suffered by those seeking asylum in Europe in unexpected fashion - and in just 24 lines. Read top-to-bottom as normal, his piece says refugees "are not welcome here", calls on them to "go back to where they came from" and says "a place should only belong to those who are born there". But the poet adds a small request at the end of his poem: "Now read from bottom-to-top". And the results are really something else...

### Refugee

*They have no need of our help*

*So do not tell me*

*These haggard faces could belong to you or I*

*Should life have dealt a different hand*

*We need to see them for who they really are*

*Chancers and scroungers*

*Layabouts and loungers*

*With bombs up their sleeves*

*Cut-throats and thieves*

*They are not*

*Welcome here*

*We should make them*

*Go back to where they came from*

*They cannot*

*Share our food*

*Share our homes*

*Share our countries*

*Instead let us*

*Build a wall to keep them out*

*It is not okay to say*

*These people are just like us*

*A place should only belong to those who are born there*

*Do not be so stupid to think that*

*The world can be looked at another way*

*(Now read from bottom to top)*