



Media Release

17th January 2014

Advance Australia Fair: Where we stand?

Ethnic Communities Council of Western Australia (ECCWA) Inc. is disappointed by the recent changes to immigration from Department of Immigration and Border Protection which are now available on their website [www.http://www.immi.gov.au/FAQs/](http://www.immi.gov.au/FAQs/)

It seems that the Illegal Maritime Arrivals (IMAs) who lodged applications under “Split Family” stream before August 2012 have lowest processing priority under the Special Humanitarian Program (SHP) and as the Department suggests they are unlikely to be successful. The Hon. Minister for Immigration announced these priorities on 19th December 2013.

Dr. Zarrin Siddiqui, President of the ECCWA commented that “in all aspects of fairness and equity if any changes are made to the laws and regulations, they should apply with effect from the date the changes are made so if there is a change announced on 19th December it should only apply to those who will lodge applications post 19th December”.

“It is already unfortunate if Australians who have been granted refugee status under the laws that prevail at the time are considered as Illegal Maritime Arrivals. The term should not be used for the group who is already granted refugee status.”

Dr. Siddiqui further commented that “it is also unfair to make a comment on a government website that the applications are *likely to be unsuccessful*. Why? What are the criteria that policy makers believe that these refugees cannot succeed? As an academic, I can relate it to how I assess students. Am I allowed to say that you can do this assignment but you are likely to fail or can I change the rules of assessment by saying that although you have enrolled in a four year degree but now it is a six year course or simply the course does not exist anymore so go to another institution? No, it does not and should not happen in any context.”

“On a very serious note, do consider what these refugees are going through when they know that their loved ones are still far away facing the harsh realities from which they have successfully escaped and these are the refugees who are making a positive contribution which is reflected in various awards, nominations and grants. Let’s make them an asset to progress our land and treat them humanely.”