World Refugee Week
Teacher's Pack 2011
An education resource to help secondary students understand refugees in Australia
“Australian people are really great. When people know my family’s story they always understand and I think feel proud to help us. I will always thank Australia for giving me the opportunity to be educated, safe and secure. I want to contribute to Australia and make it proud of me.”

Najeeba Wazefadost, 22, Australian citizen, university student, former refugee
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FOREWORD

This pack and the ideas it represents are a wonderful resource to have in schools. The practical and widely accessible activities are a great way to get students of all ages and backgrounds thinking more clearly and communicating more honestly about the plight of refugees. And the activities fit really well within my existing class plans and can be taught as individual lessons or to provide the foundations for much needed further studies.

The case studies provide students with a confronting look at the reality of seeking asylum. It is moving to watch students connect with Najeeba and Raph’s stories, and begin to critically analyse previously-held assumptions about refugees in Australia.

This pack and the work by SBS, Amnesty International and the Refugee Council of Australia are a fantastic step in the right direction to educating Australian students about this issue.

Hannah Payne
English and History teacher, Years 9 and 10, NSW

Cover: Children of former refugees from Vietnam (from bottom left): Daniel Le, Khua Nguyen, Catty Phan and Duy Le. © Hamish Gregory/AI
Below: Najeeba Wazefadost (second from left) with her brother Madhi and sisters Raihana and Nooria. © Hamish Gregory/AI
INTRODUCTION

People from all over the world gather to celebrate World Refugee Week every year.

This year’s theme is ‘Freedom from Fear’. It explores the fear that compels refugees to flee their homeland and the relief they feel when they are welcomed into another country and given the opportunity to rebuild their lives.

World Refugee Week in 2011 will be celebrated from 19–25 June. To help schools get involved, SBS, Amnesty International and the Refugee Council of Australia have worked together to produce this secondary education resource on refugees in Australia.

We hope it will allow teachers and students to explore the complex area of refugees. We have created activities that cut through the noise that surrounds this issue and focus on the facts and the personal stories of real refugees who have found safety in our country.

This resource complements events taking place in the community during Refugee Week. Nonetheless, the refugee issue is important year round, so we encourage you to use this resource whenever it fits best into your teaching and learning program.

Finally, to help us improve future resources and activities, we would love you to take a moment to fill in the feedback form in your pack.

All the best,

Bindi Newman  Alex Pagliaro  Sophie Peer
SBS  Amnesty International  Refugee Council of Australia

A major event during World Refugee Week will be the premiere of the television documentary Go Back to Where You Came From on SBS ONE. This ambitious new production follows the journey of six ordinary Australians as they retrace the modern-day refugee journey to Australia.

Watch Go Back to Where You Came From in a special television event screening across three consecutive nights:
Tuesday 21, Wednesday 22 & Thursday 23 June, 8.30pm on SBS ONE.
Catch up online www.sbs.com.au/goback

Left: Burma’s Rohingya minority are persecuted by their government and regularly flee to Bangladesh. In refugee camps young people must take up additional responsibilities and work in harsh conditions at a young age. © UNHCR/S Kritsanavarin

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USING THIS RESOURCE

Curriculum links
This resource is suitable for use in all state curricula and is recommended for lower and middle secondary students. It has direct links to the following subjects:

- Studies of Society and Environment / Human Society and its Environment
- Civics and Citizenship
- Values and Religious Education.

Learning outcomes
Understand the key concepts and facts about refugees and asylum seekers.
Understand some of the reasons people seek asylum.
Critically analyse the myths and stereotypes surrounding asylum seekers and refugees.
Become familiar with human rights and the right to seek asylum in particular.

NOTE: Refugees in the classroom
This kit contains information and encourages discussion about issues that may be difficult for staff or students who are former refugees. This does not mean the issues should be avoided. Indeed there may be scope for students to share unique insights. However we ask that participants display sensitivity toward individuals who may find discussion of this topic to be emotionally stressful.

Rights in the classroom*
We are all born free and equal.
We all have our own thoughts and ideas.
We should all be treated in the same way.
We all have the right to make up our own minds, to think what we like, to say what we think, and to share our ideas with other people.
These rights belong to everyone, whatever our differences.

*Adapted from the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, preamble and articles 1, 2, 18, 19, 28, and 29.
Who is a refugee?
A refugee has been defined by the United Nations as someone who:
● Has a well-founded fear of persecution as a result of her/his race, religion, nationality, social group or political opinion.
● Is outside her/his country of origin.
● Is unable to seek protection from her/his own country’s government.
An asylum seeker is someone who is seeking protection but whose claim for refugee status has not yet been assessed.

The Refugee Convention
The UN Refugee Convention is an international human rights treaty that was drafted in 1951. It was created because the large number of people fleeing eastern Europe after World War II made it clear that the international community had a responsibility to protect people fleeing for their lives.
The convention defines a refugee, outlines the rights of refugees and explains what governments should do to protect refugees in their territory.
In countries that haven’t signed the Refugee Convention, the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR) is responsible for protecting refugees and, where possible, arranging for them to either safely return home, integrate into society or be resettled in another country.

Has the Refugee Convention helped?
Over the past 60 years, the Refugee Convention and the countries that have signed it have protected millions of people. From Spanish escaping Franco’s dictatorship to Vietnamese fleeing persecution after the Vietnam War, this international framework is usually the best chance that the world’s most vulnerable people have of finding safety.
The convention and the accompanying UNHCR guidelines are not always followed but when they are, people can be protected, crises can be averted and the world can be a slightly better place.

Refugees around the world today
There are more than 15 million refugees in the world today:
● 80 per cent live in developing countries.
● More than half live in urban areas and less than a third live in camps.
● In 2009, almost 1 million asylum seekers asked for refugee status worldwide.
● 47 per cent of refugees and asylum seekers are women and girls.

Refugees in Australia
Australia has been a proud signatory of the Refugee Convention since its inception and has resettled more than 750,000 refugees.
There are two channels through which refugees may enter Australia:
● Some arrive as asylum seekers by boat or plane. The Australian Government processes their claims and will protect them if they are deemed genuine refugees.
● Others are selected for protection through the UNHCR resettlement program and brought to Australia directly.
No matter how they arrive, refugees have overwhelmingly settled well into Australian society and contributed positively to their new country.
ACTIVITY 1: WHAT DO WE KNOW ABOUT REFUGEES?

This activity sets the scene and makes sure students are familiar with the issues and terminology.

It is likely that students will have a wide spectrum of opinions and emotions about this issue. This activity will help to develop a space that is free from judgement and where all opinions can be shared and respected.

Preparation
Read the introduction to this pack to familiarise yourself with the background to World Refugee Week.

Running the activity
Explain World Refugee Week to the class.
Ask students to explain why it might be important to celebrate World Refugee Week by learning about refugees in Australia.
To generate discussion ask:
● Why do Australia and many other countries protect refugees?
● Why do people become refugees?
● How do refugees reach Australia?
Ask students say if they have any concerns about discussing refugee issues?
Display student’s responses openly in the classroom to refer to if necessary in later activities.

Further activity: Create an opinion map
Draw a map of opinions that students have heard different people express about refugees. Categorise the opinions under these headings:
● What is the opinion?
● Who holds this opinion?
● Why do you think they might say this?
Most refugees who arrive in Australia have experienced extreme situations. Their stories can be confronting but also often are inspiring. Unfortunately, refugees rarely get to tell their story to the broader public.

This activity will allow students to explore the reasons people become refugees, to develop empathy for individual refugees and asylum seekers and to gain a context for this issue.

Preparation
Photocopy or download Najeeba’s or Raph’s story for each student (pages 14 and 15).

Running the activity
Divide the class into smaller groups.
Handout or display a copy of the story to each group and allow students time to read it.
Discuss, in groups, what her/his life might be like, for example:
● What has she/he experienced/seen.
● How she/he may have felt at the time.
● What human rights were being denied to her/him in her/his homeland?
The theme for this year’s Refugee Week is ‘Freedom from Fear’.
List what fears and what hopes you think these refugees had at each stage of their journey.

Further activity: Journal of a refugee
Read the following scenario:
An alien army has taken over Earth and decided to use all humans as slaves. You and your family manage to escape to the moon and wait there in a camp for a year, but there aren’t enough space or resources and the moon’s government is talking about sending all refugees back to Earth. Your mum hears about a spaceship that will smuggle you to Jupiter (a safe planet with a reputation for protecting refugees). It will cost all your family’s money and be very dangerous but you decide to risk it.
Ask students to imagine that they are the character in the scenario and write a series of short first person journal entries adding detail to the scenario and describing their fears and hopes at each stage. Use the following headings:
● Entry 1: Invasion of Earth
● Entry 2: Escape to the moon
● Entry 3: Life on the moon
● Entry 4: Deciding to flee
● Entry 5: Smuggled to Jupiter.
Alternatively, choose a scenario from a country that has featured in the news such as Libya or Ivory Coast.
Throughout history refugees have often been ostracised and marginalised by host communities. This is made easier by prevailing myths and stereotypes. This activity will allow students to examine the common myths in Australia and consider the consequences of ignoring the facts.

**Preparation**
Photocopy or display the fact and myth sheets (pages 16 and 17).

**Running the activity**
Discuss what the class knows about refugees in Australia and decide what is fact and what is myth. Make a list of each.

To stimulate discussion ask:
- What is the definition of a refugee and an asylum seeker?
- Is it illegal to seek asylum?
- Is Australia being swamped by asylum seekers?
- Does Australia have a legal obligation to protect refugees?

Hand out or display the fact and myth sheets.

Review the list of facts and myths and make any necessary corrections. Which facts were the class not even aware of?

**Explain that a recent opinion poll found that 80 per cent of Australians believe it is illegal to seek asylum – so if they thought this, they are not alone!**

Answer the following questions (individually or in groups):
- Where does this misinformation come from – media, politicians, parents and/or friends?
- What are the consequences of widespread misinformation?
- What can individuals and community groups do to help counter this misinformation?

**Further activity: Write a blog**
Ask students to write a short blog that explores one fact that they have just learned. Ask them to reflect on why they didn’t know this fact before and whether knowing this fact has changed their attitude towards refugees in Australia.

Publish the best blogs in your school’s publication or send them to rethinkrefugees@amnesty.org.au for a chance to be displayed on the Amnesty International Australia website.
Even though Australia was strange at first, it was still like heaven. I had freedom. I live in Melbourne and love going to school and hanging out with my friends.

When I graduate next year, I want to be a professional basketball player for Australia.”

Raph, 18, Australian citizen, former asylum seeker
Go Back to Where You Came From is one of the most ambitious documentaries ever made for Australian television.

It is the intense, raw and compelling journey of six ordinary Australians who live as refugees and asylum seekers for one month, tracing in reverse the steps that modern-day refugees and asylum seekers take to reach Australia.

The six participants, of different ages and backgrounds, each come to the journey with different perspectives: some strongly disagree with refugees and asylum seekers; others welcome them to Australian shores. Their route takes them to some of the most dangerous and desperate corners of the world – from Kenya to the Democratic Republic of the Congo, from Malaysia to Iraq. They become immersed in an exhausting and emotional journey, during which they will be confronted with the harsh realities of life as a refugee and asylum seeker.

Along the way the participants debate and reflect on their previously-held views. None leaves the journey untouched by the experience.

Go Back to Where You Came From will be featured on SBS Radio language programs inviting listeners from all backgrounds to take part in the debate. SBS online will also feature previews, catch-ups and school resources – visit www.sbs.com.au/goback.

Go Back to Where You Came From for schools

1. An interactive curriculum-relevant classroom resource for secondary schools will feature:
   - clips from the documentary
   - curriculum applications
   - student classroom activities
   - facts, statistics and background notes.

2. ‘Asylum: Exit Australia’ is an interactive application that puts users in the shoes of an asylum seeker www.sbs.com.au/goback
CASE STUDY 1
NAJEEBA FROM AFGHANISTAN

I fled Afghanistan when I was 12 years old. My family are Hazara, a persecuted minority group. This meant that whenever we walked in the streets we faced constant abuse and threats. It seemed like every day we witnessed our neighbours, or friends disappearing. We knew people who were forced to sell their daughters and people whose sons were taken by the Taliban to become soldiers.

A few months before we left, the Taliban closed our school because girls were being taught there. We had an Iranian teacher who was very brave and kept teaching us in secret in her house. The Taliban killed her.

Our father arranged for us to leave. We travelled to Pakistan by bus, car and foot. We had no passport or identification but my father managed to get us on a plane from Pakistan to Indonesia. I remember that I wasn’t scared, just excited to be on a plane.

In Indonesia, we got on a boat to Australia. It was so crowded we had to sit with our knees squashed against our chests. We were sea sick and so scared of drowning. After 10 whole days at sea, we were rescued by the Australian Navy.

I was so excited to arrive and see Australia. But when I saw all the fences at Derby Detention centre (in northern WA) and the many guards coming towards us, I thought it was the Taliban. I thought the Taliban had tricked us and somehow managed to trap us. I know this might seem crazy but we had been so scared for so long that anything was possible. As we walked into the detention centre and the gates closed behind us, I said to my Dad, “We made a mistake, this is the wrong place”.

Then I was locked up like a small bird in a cage. I would watch Big Brother on TV while I was in detention. They would fight and go crazy even though it was just a game. For us it was so much worse. We were so frightened about being sent back and full of worry for the family members we had left back home.

When we were told we had our visa, we were so excited. We screamed and shouted and jumped on my father, hugging him all together. It is impossible to explain the feeling in my heart when I knew that after so many years, my family would be safe and free. I was 14 years old when we were released.

I thought, now we can think about our future. Now I can become someone real. I can go to university. I love living in Australia. I am so thankful to be an Australian citizen. I always dreamed to have the life I have now. I always wanted to be a uni student, to learn English.

When I am outside, I don’t have to worry about being attacked or raped because I’m a girl. When my dad leaves the house, I don’t have to worry that it is the last time I will see him. I have access to food, shelter and love without the constant fear of loss. I have the freedom to tell my story, to raise my voice.”
I was born in Sudan in 1992. When I was five, the war began.
My family is Christian and it was too dangerous for us to stay in our home in the North so we fled to the South where most Christians live. We tried to avoid the fighting but it got more and more dangerous.
In 2000 we heard that people from the North were about to invade so my parents sent me further south into Kenya to find my older brother. It was very risky but they thought I would be safer with him and out of Sudan.
They put me on a soldier truck that was taking people across the border. The journey was very long and we travelled through fighting and tribal wars. I don’t even know who was fighting who exactly, I just remember lots of violence. It took us more than a month to arrive in Kakuma, a big refugee camp in Kenya.
Kakuma was terrifying. It was more horrible than the journey on the truck and even worse than living in Sudan. It was so poor and I missed my mum and dad. During the day it was okay, but at night we were often attacked by Masai warriors, a Kenyan tribe that came and fought us with spears and stole food and supplies from the camp.
In 2001, I found out that my brother was in Nairobi, the capital city of Kenya. I managed to leave the camp and find him. I hadn’t seen my brother for years but this was the first time I remember feeling really safe. My brother had applied for refugee resettlement with the UN and he asked that I be resettled with him.
When I found out that I was going to Australia I was happy and I knew it was a good thing. But I didn’t really understand properly, I never even knew there were places outside of Africa!
Even though Australia was strange at first, it was still like heaven. I had freedom. I live in Melbourne and love going to school and hanging out with my friends.
When I graduate next year, I want to be a professional basketball player for Australia.”
FACT SHEET

A refugee is someone who has been forced to flee their country due to persecution.

This means they are at risk of serious human rights abuse because of their race, religion, nationality, social group or political opinion. They may face unfair imprisonment, torture or death.

An asylum seeker is someone who is seeking protection but whose claim for refugee status has not yet been assessed.

It is not illegal under Australian or international law to seek asylum, even if arriving by boat without a visa.

Article 14 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights states that everyone has the right to seek asylum from persecution. This right is also outlined in the UN Refugee Convention, which Australia has signed.

Refugee numbers

There are about 15 million refugees in the world today.

Australia protects about 13,750 refugees each year. This is less than 0.1 per cent of the world’s refugees.

In 2010, 6,879 asylum seekers sought refuge in Australia by boat. This is less than 3 per cent of Australia’s total migration.

More than 90 per cent of asylum seekers who arrive by boat prove to be genuine refugees fleeing violence, terror and persecution.

Comparison of asylum seekers in industrialised countries in 2010:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Asylum Seekers</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Australia</td>
<td>8,250</td>
<td>4.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UK</td>
<td>22,090</td>
<td>11.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>USA</td>
<td>55,530</td>
<td>29.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>France</td>
<td>47,790</td>
<td>25.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canada</td>
<td>23,160</td>
<td>12.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sweden</td>
<td>31,820</td>
<td>16.9%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
MYTH SHEET

MYTH: Asylum seekers who arrive by boat are illegal.
DID YOU KNOW: It is legal to seek asylum in Australia, even if you arrive on a boat without a visa. Seeking asylum is a legal right guaranteed under Australian and international law, and it is against the law for governments to punish asylum seekers no matter how they get here.

MYTH: Asylum seekers who arrive by boat are queue jumpers.
DID YOU KNOW: Asylum seekers are not breaking the rules, even if they arrive by boat. For 99 per cent of people who need protection, seeking asylum in another country is their only choice. Resettlement through the UN (‘the queue’) is only available for a very small group, and the resettlement program exists to work with the asylum system, not to replace it.

MYTH: If all they want is protection, they could stay in Indonesia or Malaysia.
DID YOU KNOW: Most asylum seekers do stay in countries like Iran, Pakistan Indonesia and Malaysia. But these places do not protect asylum seekers or refugees, so some are forced to flee further afield. Even then, most asylum seekers head for Europe and America. There is no country between Afghanistan and Australia that has signed the Refugee Convention.

MYTH: Asylum seekers are just after a better job.
DID YOU KNOW: Nearly all asylum seekers who arrive by boat are found to be refugees fleeing persecution, war and violence. The definition of a refugee is internationally-agreed and a low economic status is not grounds for being recognised as a refugee.

MYTH: If asylum seekers can afford to get here, they don’t need protection.
DID YOU KNOW: It costs between $5,000 and $20,000 to seek asylum in Australia. Many asylum seekers are not wealthy, but borrow money from relatives and/or sell land and possessions to make the journey to safety.

MYTH: Asylum seekers should get help from the UN in their country.
DID YOU KNOW: It is often very difficult, and even impossible, for asylum seekers to get help from the UN. Often they don’t even know the UN exists, or it is too dangerous to go to the city where the UN office is. Even if they are able to contact the UN and get UN refugee status, there may be little the UN can do to assist them – you cannot seek asylum from within your own country.

MYTH: Asylum seekers destroy their identity documents to get refugee status.
DID YOU KNOW: When escaping oppressive governments or sudden violence, it is often impossible to bring or get a passport, or these documents are lost or stolen during the long journey to safety. In some cases, people are told that they have a better chance of protection if they destroy their documents but governments can and should assess asylum claims and protect refugees, even without identity documents.

MYTH: Australia accepts its fair share of refugees.
DID YOU KNOW: Australia protects around 14,000 refugees each year. When compared with other countries we only rank 68th in refugees per capita.
Amnesty International

Send a message of support
Amnesty International is asking people around Australia to send a message of support to asylum seekers and refugees who are in detention.

Visit www.rethinkrefugees.com.au and use your voice to send hope to someone seeking asylum in Australia.

Email rethinkrefugees@amnesty.org.au to request a refugee action pack for your school.

Start a school action group
Amnesty International knows that students can be a powerful force for change. Our student action groups play a vital role in taking action to defend human rights in Australia and all over the world.

Start an Amnesty International school action group now.
Visit: www.amnesty.org.au/schoolaction

Refugee Council of Australia

Hold a World Refugee Week event
The Refugee Council of Australia is coordinating activities all over Australia to celebrate refugees.

Get a school World Refugee Week committee together, host your own event (be sure to register it with us), attend an event near you (see the calendar on our website) and get hold of our poster. Or take your own positive steps: reach out to your local community, use social media to highlight something refugee related – a terrific person, great song, delicious recipe, crazy fact or simply a reminder to your friends that it’s World Refugee Week.

Refugee Welcome Zone
Do you live in a Refugee Welcome Zone? If not, it’s easy to work with your local council to become one.

Or... adapt the program to make your school a refugee welcome zone. Work with the art class to create posters, a sign or a banner.

What is a Refugee Welcome Zone and how do you become one? All the details and resources you need are on our website www.refugeecouncil.org.au
WEBLINKS

**The United Nations High Commission for Refugees** provides statistics, reports and case studies on refugees and asylum seekers around the world.  
[www.unhcr.org](http://www.unhcr.org)

**Amnesty International** provides up-to-date blogs, country reports, news articles, policy analysis and further human rights education resources on refugees in Australian and around the world, as well as ways to take action to help this issue.  

**The Refugee Council of Australia** offers loads of facts sheets, reports, position papers, overview of media coverage and some case studies.  
[www.refugeecouncil.org.au](http://www.refugeecouncil.org.au)

**Rethink Refugees** is a new project launched by Amnesty International Australia that promotes the facts and the real stories of refugees who arrive in Australia by boat.  

**The Australian Human Rights Commission** provides reports on detention conditions, children asylum seekers and other Australian immigration policy.  

**The Department of Immigration and Citizenship** provides fact sheets, statistics and information about the processes involved in Australia’s refugee determination system.  

**SBS** is Australia’s multilingual and multicultural national broadcasting service. Our principal function, as set out in the SBS Charter, is to provide multilingual and multicultural radio and television services that inform, educate and entertain all Australians, and, in doing so, reflect and promote Australia’s multicultural society. SBS broadcasts to a national television and radio audience and delivers content online on its website [www.sbs.com.au](http://www.sbs.com.au)

**Amnesty International** is a worldwide movement of people campaigning to protect human rights. We have a vision of a world in which every person enjoys all of the rights stated in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and other international human rights standards.

**The Refugee Council of Australia** is the national umbrella body for more than 150 organisations working with refugees and asylum seekers. It is actively involved in research, policy development, public information and representation on refugee and asylum issues. Combined with A Just Australia we have more than 10,000 supporters committed to seeing the fair and humane treatment of refugees and asylum seekers in Australia.

**CONTRIBUTORS**
Catch the premiere of the television documentary Go Back to Where You Came From on Tuesday 21, Wednesday 22 and Thursday 23 June at 8.30pm on SBS ONE. www.sbs.com.au/goback

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The program Go Back To Where You Came From © Cordell Jigsaw Productions Pty Ltd, Special Broadcasting Service Corporation, Screen Australia, Screen NSW.

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