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## Asylum seeker policy welcomed

**July 31, 2008**

The Canberra Multicultural Community Forum (CMCF) has welcomed the reforms in Australia's immigration detention system announced by the Minister, Chris Evans, this week.

CMCF Chair Sam Wong echoed the praise of the Federation of Ethnic Community Councils of Australia (FECCA) for the move, which he said has belatedly restored some compassion and dignity to the nation's policy on asylum seekers.

"The policy is not perfect, and CMCF is disappointed that Christmas Island will remain open as an initial processing centre and in certain cases a detention centre, but this is a huge step in the right direction," he said.

"We are in agreement that people who arrive as asylum seekers without going through the normal channels need to be processed and assessed and those who may pose a threat to the community must be detained, but we would rather this was done on the Australian mainland.

"CMCF believes very few refugees arriving on our shores will present any danger – they are frightened, desperate people seeking to avoid persecution and with the hope of starting a new life for themselves and their children."

Mr Wong said that by accepting the vast majority of asylum seekers could live freely in the community while their cases were being decided brought Australia into line with many other Western countries.

"The numbers arriving here are insignificant compared with the hundreds of thousands seeking to settle in Europe, but European countries have always managed to deal with the problem without locking people up for years on end."

For further information contact Sam Wong on 0433 947 888.