

## **New South Wales Jewish Board of Deputies Statement on Australian Refugee Policy**

**29 October 2009**

The NSW Jewish community reaffirms its support for a humane refugee admission programme in Australia.

The Convention on the Status of Refugees grew out of the need to assist Jews seeking new homes after the Holocaust. We recall the important contribution that Jewish and other refugees have made to the development of Australia and the efforts of many Jewish advocates in developing the Convention. It is essential in a developed nation such as Australia, which takes such pride in its multiculturalism and respect for human rights, that the Government's refugee policy respects these ideals.

We recognise the Australian Government's right to establish and maintain its own immigration policy and to screen all potential immigrants. The admission of asylum seekers, however, is a humanitarian act, and differs from other aspects of immigration policy. It is also subject to international law in a way that other immigration policy is not.

We believe that Australia's Government and Parliament should work constructively with other governments and appropriate non-government organisations to ameliorate the plight of refugees around the world and in Australia, and to implement Australia's important legal and moral obligations with respect to refugees.

In that context, there needs to be a policy of non-discrimination in the treatment of onshore asylum seekers and refugees, and a recognition of the special settlement needs of refugees.

We call on the Australian Government to fulfil Australia's important legal and moral obligations with respect to refugees and we support Australia's continued commitment to the Refugee Convention and the resettlement of refugees in co-ordination with UNHCR.

Robin Margo S.C.  
President