

The fear of boat people must stop

EDITORIAL

By LARA McEWEN

CLINGING for life to a tiny, dilapidated boat in the middle of the ocean, escaping a war-torn country, only to be locked up or turned away by authorities in Australia.

This is the predicament of many asylum seekers and "boat people" who set out with their families in search of freedom in Australia.

According to the Refugee Council of Australia, getting on a boat is a last resort for asylum seekers. They may not have the time or opportunity to seek refugee status through the proper channels, or it may not be safe for them to do so.

In Australia, most of us don't know what it is like to have war on our doorstep. We take for granted our daily lives, education, health-care and the safety of our families. We don't spend time worrying about whether or not our family will make it through the day alive, or become another casualty of war.

Despite their plight, many Australians remain largely unsympathetic towards asylum seekers. We fear their arrival and debate an appropriate solution to the "problem".

Our political leaders have a lot to answer for. Their catchcry of "we will stop the boats" feeds the public's negative perception; as the politicians themselves work to convince us who can take the strongest stance on the issue.

While our mighty leaders continue preaching to us about how they plan to stop the dreaded boats, why hasn't anyone put a real face on the issue?

Educate the public about who these people are, where they are coming from, what their life is like. Give us the facts so that we can develop our own opinion on the issue. Instead, they act on the public's fear of the unknown, whipping people into a panic over the arrival of another boat crammed full of desperate, faceless people to overpopulate our nation.

The Refugee Council of Australia points out that in 2010-11, less than 1.3 per cent of our migrant population were asylum seekers who arrived by boat.

These people have lives just as valuable as yours and mine. They have hopes, dreams, families and potential. They have a right to be safe and feel protected, to live in peace and plan for the future.

Australians pride themselves on mateship and helping the less fortunate. Yet, the way we have handled the asylum seekers issue is truly un-Australian.



Cartoon: Annan Sarder



FORTUNATE: Fariz, left, with mum Teraiza, sister Lily and nephew Joseph. Picture: Kaila Stead

A new life full of opportunity

By KAILA STEAD

FARIZ Bringi has come a long way.

Nine years ago, he arrived in Australia as a refugee. The Bringi family fled Sudan and later Cairo, after securing sponsorship from existing Australian residents.

Since those early days, Fariz and his family have made Australia their home.

"When I first started school I thought that it was hard, because I didn't know English and my family couldn't help me," Fariz explained.

He now loves coming to school and considers himself to be a hard-working student.

As a budding athlete, Fariz has achieved some exceptional results

including representative appearances for cross country, 100-metre sprint, junior relay and long jump.

Fariz's mum, Teraiza Wala, is thankful for her life in Australia, but longs for her family to go back to Sudan so she can show them where she grew up.

"I am very glad to have my children with me and I am proud that all my children have good education and that [my daughters] Liza and Andira are studying at university to become a teacher and to get a law degree," she said.

"I am also very proud of myself because I have achieved Certificate III in nursing and I have recently done Certificate III in child care and will continue studying for a diploma."

Bypass may be ready by year's end

By JULIA LAWRENCE

LOCAL residents and commuters are losing patience with the traffic bottleneck on the roundabout near the Wetlands Centre in Shortland.

During peak times, hundreds of cars can be stuck in the right-hand turning lane approaching the roundabout and have to wait up to 15 minutes to pass through.

Shortland resident Chris Lawrence said while he appreciates the traffic flow will improve when work on the Shortland to Sandgate bypass is complete, the project had dragged on for too long.

"Patience with the current conditions is thinning amongst drivers and this tension is manifesting in a very real manner during peak hours," he said.

Once complete, the \$143 million bypass will allow motorists travelling towards Maitland on Maitland Road to continue travelling straight through without needing to take the exit and use the roundabout.

Newcastle Inner-City Bypass Alliance Senior Environmental and Community Adviser Kris Hincks said the completion of the project should ease the congestion.

"It is believed there will be a reduction in traffic volumes," Mr Hincks said.

He said the project was expected to be completed later this year or early next year.

Rising son returns from tough Japan tour

By KAILA STEAD and LARA McEWEN

A 12-YEAR-OLD Jesmond Public School student is one step closer to achieving his dreams after travelling to Japan recently to represent NSW in soccer.

Hayden Seaton was selected as part of the under-12 Emerging Jets team and from there qualified to be part of the 16-member Japan squad.

The competition took place in Japan in late July with the local team playing against sides from coun-

tries including Mexico, Russia and Japan.

Hayden was thrilled to receive the news he had qualified for the team and said his trip was an amazing experience.

"Playing against some of the best players in the world was tough but I feel that my game has really stepped up since then," he said.

Hayden has been playing soccer since he was four and said his ambition was to play soccer professionally for Australia and at an international level.

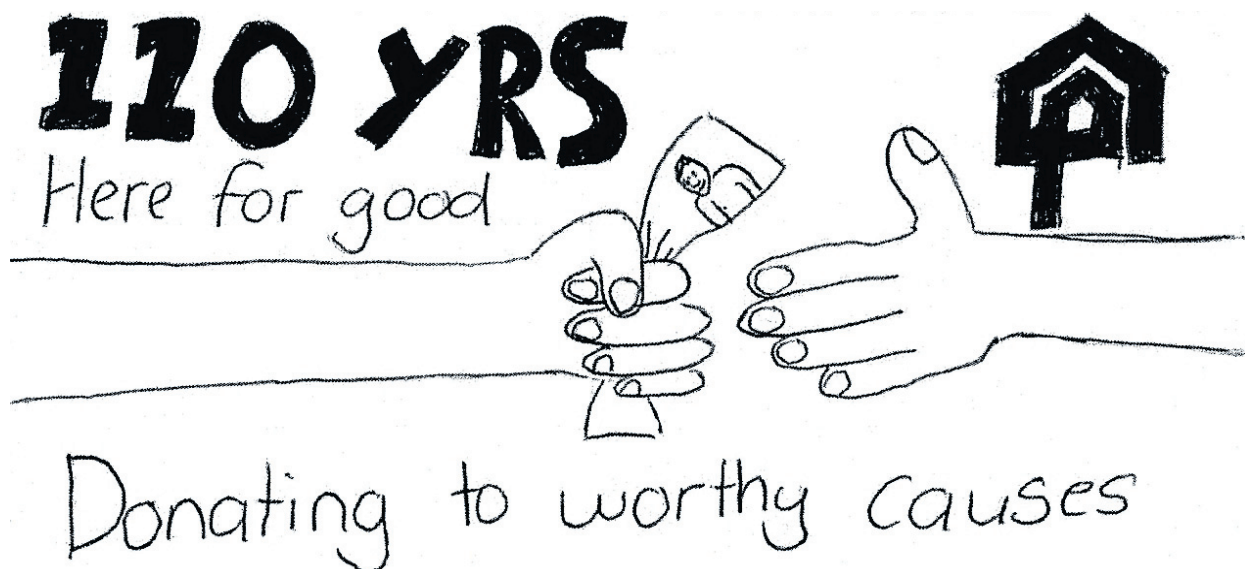


GLOBETROTTER: Emerging Jet Hayden Seaton in his Japan playing strip. Picture: Kaila Stead

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