

Why are we keen to stop the boats?

EDITORIAL

By **CLAIRE O'BRIEN,**
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WHY are Australians so concerned about people from other countries coming here? Australia is a nation of immigrants and census data shows that almost a quarter of us were born overseas.

In a survey taken in 2010, 78 per cent of Australians said they were concerned about the asylum seekers coming to our shores by boat. Stories about illegal immigrants and asylum seekers feature in our weekly news.

An illegal immigrant is someone who enters a country in violation of the immigration laws of that country.

An asylum seeker or refugee is a person who has been forced to leave their country in order to escape war, persecution or natural disaster. Yet the two descriptions are often used to mean the same thing, even though they are very different.

It's a humanitarian offering to accept asylum seekers because it's giving people who have suffered great trauma in their lives, a home. We can give them a huge opportunity to have a better life.

The first wave of boat people came in April 1976. Within five years, 2059 boats arrived. The arrival of 27 Indo-Chinese asylum seekers in November 1989 began the second wave.

In 1999, the third wave of asylum seekers, predominantly from the Middle East, began to arrive, often in larger numbers than the previous arrivals and usually with the assistance of people smugglers.

But Australia is not alone in the world with managing large numbers of refugees.

In 2008, the number of refugees increased by 12 per cent. During 2008 there were more than 26 million refugees displaced internationally.

At the end of 2011, 80 per cent of Africa's population was made up of refugees and in Asia 84 per cent. In 2011, Pakistan was host to the largest number of refugees worldwide, with a population of 1.7 million.

In the US it is estimated that more than 500,000 illegal boats arrive each year. In 2000, about 3000 boats arrived in Australia, Iran and Pakistan.

We get fewer refugees than other countries and yet, it seems our government has decided we are unwilling to help.

Perhaps we should recall the words of our national anthem: "For those who've come across the seas, We've boundless plains to share".



Cartoon: Tyzaac McCarthy-Wulf



DANGER: People should avoid synthetic drugs. Picture: Blake Wright

New drug law is short term

By **AIDAN SARGENT**
and **BLAKE WRIGHT**

A 90-DAY temporary ban on synthetic drugs has been issued by the NSW government, following the death of a teenager in Sydney.

Synthetic drugs are the newest in a long line of substances that can affect the health and future of our nation's children.

These new drugs can be invented to bypass loopholes in the law.

Politicians may try to close the loopholes, however senator Nick Xenophon said: "The ban can only be temporary without the federal government being involved".

He urges federal government action, but how much difference can

this make? Legislators cannot hope to keep up with the advances in science.

They must concentrate on the education of the community so people can realise it's not smart to take drugs when they have ingredients with unknown side effects.

History has shown that even drugs that have been made to help people can have devastating consequences, such as our country's own experience with thalidomide, 50 years ago.

School programs on drug education can help send the message that "all drugs are potentially dangerous unless prescribed by a doctor," said Terry Cone, primary teacher.

If children are to be kept safe they need to know the real risks.

Keep trash out of the waterways

By **TULLARA BROWN,**
ALAYNA BURLEY and
ASHLEY CADMAN

THERE is a huge garbage dump, known as the Great Pacific garbage patch, that is nearly the size of NSW in the middle of the ocean.

If a dump this size was anywhere in Australia there would be a public outcry, but because it is located in the middle of the ocean, no one seems to know.

Around 100 million tonnes of plastic are produced each year and 10 million tonnes of that ends up in the ocean, most of it from land pollution washed into our waterways.

Australians use more than six billion plastic bags per year.

Plastics are the most common man-made objects sighted at sea, with 18,000 pieces of plastic litter floating on every square kilometre of the world's oceans.

Hundreds of thousands of turtles and sea mammals around the world are killed by plastic ocean litter every year.

It is estimated that 1,910,777 cigarette butts travel down waterways and make their way into oceans every year.

Every effort to minimise the use and disposal of plastic helps the environment.

According to one environmentalist in Singleton: "By the time the ocean dump is big enough to see from land, it will be far too late. We all need to take responsibility today."

Parents must immunise or compromise

By **RILEY STEWART**
and **MAY BUTLER**

PRESCHOOLS in NSW have started to ban children from attending if they haven't had up-to-date vaccinations.

Parents currently show proof that their child is immunised before starting school, and may be excluded when there are outbreaks of contagious and preventable diseases.

Vaccinations have saved thousands of lives and eradicated diseases that previously crippled children. People have forgotten the

devastating effects of polio because it no longer is a threat.

Only 1.5 per cent of parents decide not to get their child immunised, but as a result, diseases such as whooping cough still threaten the lives of babies and children.

Parents have the right to decide what happens to their child. Other parents also have the right to expect their child to be safe. If children are exposed, contagious diseases can quickly spread throughout a community.



SAFEGUARD: Doug and Ben are happy to be protected from certain diseases. Picture: Riley Stewart

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