Reporting Australia's Asylum Seeker "Crisis"

This paper looks at the way the Australian media has reported the "crisis" of refugees and asylum seekers landing on Australia's shores without authorisation. The author argues that the arrival of the "boat people" is in fact a "pseudo crisis" and that the level of anxiety attached to the issue is totally out of proportion with the actual "threat" posed by unauthorised migration.

In general the level of concern and empathy expressed in the media for the plight of refugees and asylum seekers seems to be in inverse relation to their proximity. Viewed from a distance, displaced people are often portrayed as helpless victims of circumstance, deserving of compassion and assistance. However when refugees and asylum seekers make their way to Australia, or other developed nations, to seek protection under the 1951 Convention, this imagery changes dramatically. Refugees and asylum seekers who display this level of agency suddenly shed the veneer of innocence and become a threat to the order and security of the receiving state. The author further argues that this results in part from what is, at best a lack of political courage by authority figures, and, at worst, cynical political expediency. However, the author also argue that humanitarian agencies are at times responsible for promoting unrealistic and unsustainable images of refugees that ill-prepare audiences for coping with the complexity of the unauthorised movement of people in the contemporary world.

Peter Mares

On 10 November 2001 Australians voted in an extraordinary federal election. Rather than focussing on traditional domestic issues like taxation levels or spending on health and education, the campaign was largely fought on issues of national security and border protection. The international backdrop to the campaign was the US-led military offensive in Afghanistan (for which Australia volunteered troops) following the September 11 terror attacks in New York and Washington. The domestic context was an atmosphere of panic about the unauthorised arrival of mostly Middle Eastern asylum seekers on Australian territory at the rate of a few hundred people per month. Within 48 hours of the September 11 attacks, Australia's Defence Minister Peter Reith had drawn an explicit link between the two, warning that the unauthorised arrival of boats on Australian territory "can be a pipeline for terrorists to come in and use your country as a staging post for terrorist activities". The irony that Afghan asylum seekers were fleeing the very same "terror" regime that Australia was helping to fight did not appear to concern him.

Neither did it worry Australia's "shock-jocks", the prime-time millionaire talkback hosts who dominate the airwaves on commercial radio. On 12 September, Alan Jones, the top-rating breakfast host on Sydney radio, confidently declared that the terror attacks had been carried out by "sleepers" — terrorists who had been living quietly in the United States for years. Turning to the Australian context, he then posed the following rhetorical question: "How many of these Afghan boat people are 'sleepers'?" Prime Minister John Howard revived the theme just a few days before polling day, telling Brisbane's Courier Mail newspaper that "[y]ou don't know who is coming [on the boats] and you don't know whether they do have terrorist links or not ..."

The campaign for Australia's November 10 federal election also followed in the wake of the so-called Tampa "crisis", when the Australian government used the navy to prevent a Norwegian container ship, the MV Tampa, from landing 433 asylum seekers at the Australian Indian Ocean territory of Christmas Island. In fact it was no crisis at all, except for those unfortunate people aboard the ship. On 26 August 2001, the MV Tampa rescued the asylum seekers from their sinking wooden ferry after being alerted to their plight by the Australian search and rescue organisation.

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However, the Australian government insisted that the Captain return the asylum seekers to a port in Indonesia, rather than the closer port of Christmas Island. The Captain of the *MV Tampa* maintained that it was not safe for him to transport so many passengers back to Indonesia, and the Australian government countered with an order that his vessel must not enter the 12 nautical mile exclusion zone around Christmas Island. After a standoff lasting three days, during which time the *MV Tampa* floated just outside the 12 mile zone, the ship’s Master defied the ban and steamed towards Christmas Island, arguing that his rescued passengers required urgent medical treatment. Australian authorities responded by sending elite SAS troops to board his vessel.

The Tampa affair marked a fundamental turning point in Australia’s refugee policy. The Prime Minister John Howard declared that asylum seekers rescued by the *MV Tampa* would not set foot on the Australian mainland, and instead naval vessels were used to transport them to Nauru and New Zealand. Australia then adopted the same approach to all subsequent vessels attempting to carry asylum seekers to its territory from Indonesia. The vessels were boarded by Australian naval personnel and told that they must return to Indonesia. In some cases warning shots were fired over the bows. If boats persisted in entering Australia’s exclusion zone, then they were boarded at sea and forcibly turned around. If the Australian navy was unable to convince or force the boats back to Indonesia, or if the boats foundered, then the asylum seekers were transferred to navy ships and taken to detention centres in Nauru, or subsequently, Papua New Guinea.

Amidst the fears and uncertainties unleashed by the September 11 terror attacks, the tough line on the "boat people" proved enormously popular with voters. As the *Australian* newspaper commented, it represented "one of the Government’s chief claims to national leadership" and was the "main preoccupation" of the election campaign. The government used the rhetoric of "border security" at every available opportunity, often demonising vulnerable people in the process. For example, on 7 October, in the first full week of the election campaign, Immigration Minister Philip Ruddock announced that a group of asylum seekers trying to reach Australia had thrown children overboard "in a clearly planned and premeditated" attempt to force their way into Australia. The story made immediate headlines and two days later, on 9 October, Prime Minister John Howard declared on radio "I certainly don’t want people of that type in Australia, I really don’t". On 10 October, Defence Minister Peter Reith released photographs of children in the sea wearing life jackets, which he presented as documentary proof of what had happened. He told ABC radio 774 in Melbourne that "[w]e have a number of people, obviously RAN [Royal Australian Navy] people, who were there who reported the children were thrown into the water." Yet serious doubts had emerged about the veracity of the original reports immediately after they were made public, and in fact, the "evidence" on which the Immigration Minister, the Defence Minister and the Prime Minister had based their public statements was fifth-hand reporting of a brief, early morning telephone conversation with the Commander of HMAS Adelaide, while he and his crew were in the midst of an operation to deter a boatload of asylum seekers from Australian waters. No attempt was made to check the veracity of the information. After the election, it was revealed that the photographic "evidence" of children in the water was from a separate incident, the following day, when the children were rescued after their boat sank. Military officers and senior public servants were aware that the reports of children being thrown overboard were untrue and that the photographs did not depict such an event. They had tried to correct the public "mistake" of their political masters before the election. However the three relevant ministers — the Prime Minister and the Ministers for Defence and Immigration — claim this advice never reached them. (At one point the Defence Minister even blamed a bad phone line for his failure to understand this information when it was delivered to him directly by the acting commander of the Australian Defence Force.) By the time the story was corrected, the election was over and the government had been returned to office. No apology was made to the asylum seekers for the way in which they had been so publicly wronged.

**Shaping Perceptions**

The demonisation of refugees and asylum seekers for political gain may have reached its apotheosis during Australia’s 2001 federal election campaign but the practice was already firmly entrenched. The media is not free of blame in this regard.

There are numerous examples of excellent reporting on the asylum seeker issue. Many journalists have made persistent efforts to expose the problems in Australia’s immigration detention centres and to give voice to the asylum seekers themselves. They have raised questions about the cost and efficacy of Australia’s harsh policy of mandatory detention for all non-citizens who arrive in the country without valid travel documents, including those who seek protection under the provisions of the 1951 Geneva Convention on Refugees. Many journalists are affronted at government attempts to censor coverage of the issue, for example by banning media access to the detention centres, or by attempting to prevent any photographs from being taken that might “humanise or personalise” asylum seekers. In the face of these clumsy attempts at media control, many journalists and editors have done their best to promote sober and rational debate about what is a complex humanitarian issue — how to deal with the unauthorised movement of people across Australia’s borders. However the media has also been responsible for peddling myths and exaggerating fears.

For example, on 23 June 2001 the Saturday edition of Brisbane’s *Courier Mail* newspaper led its front page with the headline “Typhoid found in refugee centres”. The story was branded “EXCLUSIVE” and revealed that Australian authorities had found “almost 1000 cases of illegal immigrants carrying infectious diseases such as typhoid, tuberculosis and hepatitis B and C” in the past 18 months. The overall message of the *Courier Mail* article was to warn of the danger posed by the outsider, the foreigner who arrives uninvited. This was made explicit in
the wording of the poster promoting that day’s edition of the *Courier Mail* outside newsagencies (which was arguably read by more people than the newspaper article itself). It stated bluntly “Detainees bring deadly diseases”.

The facts of the *Courier Mail* story were as follows. Since 1 January 2000, federal immigration department officials had notified various state health authorities of 973 instances of infectious diseases in Australia’s six immigration detention centres. The vast majority of the people identified with health problems would have been asylum seekers. Most would have come originally from the Middle East, and would have arrived in Australia via Indonesia, undertaking the last stage of the journey by boat. In all, authorities had identified ten cases of typhoid, a disease “eradicated decades ago in Australia” as the paper breathlessly informed us. In fact this information, which formed the basis of the front-page headline, was neither new nor exclusive. The Immigration Minister had spoken about the discovery of typhoid in the detention centres more than four months earlier, and had used it then to convey exactly the same message of risk, hitting back at critics who called for asylum seekers to be released more swiftly from detention.

Health authorities had also confirmed eight cases of active tuberculosis, requiring immediate treatment. However the vast bulk of the “infectious diseases” identified amongst the detainees in fact posed very little immediate risk to the general community. There were around 700 notifications for inactive TB infection requiring follow up by chest clinics. This is hardly surprising, given that around one third of the world’s population (including about one third of all Australians over the age of 50) are latent carriers of TB. Few of these people fall sick with the disease and are likely to do so only if their overall health is severely compromised by other factors, such as poor nutrition. Another 200 notifications were made for cases of hepatitis B or C, diseases which are only transmissible by the exchange of blood or other bodily fluids and not by general human contact. There were also a handful of notifications for sexually transmitted diseases and four cases of HIV. At no point did the *Courier Mail* attempt to clarify the actual risk of infection to the general community from these notified diseases.

In a different context, a story about the discovery of infectious diseases in a “refugee centre” would invoke the sympathy of the audience, and may involve an implied or explicit call for humanitarian intervention by international agencies and Western governments. However, while an affliction can be cause for compassion in one instance (as in reporting of the Kosovo crisis in 1999 or the fate of displaced Afghans in late 2001) in another it can be used to invoke feelings of fear. In this case, the editorial intention of the article was not to express concern for the well being of the detainees, but to warn of the grave threat that these uninvited visitors posed to Australian society. The message of threat was reinforced by quotes in the article from both sides of politics. “Any Australian Government would fail if it let people possibly carrying infectious diseases out into the general community before all health checks”, said the Immigration Minister Philip Ruddock from the conservative Liberal Party. His opposite number in the Labor Party, Con Sciaca, declared that “it was absolutely necessary” to carry out health checks to “protect the wider community”. The editorial intent of the article was further re-inforced by a commentary piece published in the same edition and written by the same author. Of course it is both logical and sensible to check the health status of people who arrive in Australia in an unauthorised and unregulated manner, but once these checks are done and appropriate action taken, any risk to the wider community is removed and the justification for continued detention disappears.

### Setting the terms of the debate — the role of political leadership

The perhaps unintended, but nevertheless pernicious implication in the *Courier Mail* story—that (all) “refugees” carry “infectious diseases” — is further reinforced by the writer’s confused terminology. The discrepancy between the words used in the headline (“refugee centres”), and those used in the body of the text (“illegal immigrants”) is telling. Such confusion, or conflation, of terminology is not uncommon. Even at my own organisation, the non-commercial Australian Broadcasting Corporation, which is meant to uphold the highest standards of journalism in Australia, I have come across news stories that use the term “illegal immigrant” in the first sentence (e.g. “A boat load of 123 suspected illegal immigrants has been discovered off the coast of Western Australian today”), to be followed by the term “asylum seekers” in the next (e.g. “It is expected that the asylum seekers will be taken to Port Hedland detention centre”). The failure to distinguish between asylum seekers, refugees, and unauthorised migrants means that all are brushed with the same tar of distrust and illegitimacy and ultimately results in patently nonsensical constructions such as “illegal asylum seekers” and even “illegal refugees”, terms that have appeared with surprising frequency in recent media reports.

Political leaders must shoulder considerable responsibility for this confusion. It is inevitable that journalists will report or broadcast the words of government ministers and parliamentarians; indeed they would be derelict in their duty if they did not do so. When a politician refers to asylum seekers as “illegals” or as “queue jumpers” who are “stealing places” from the “most vulnerable” refugees, then this language is dispersed through the media and swiftly becomes common currency. The notion of the queue jumper is powerful because it offends our sense of fair play. This simple image of someone shoving their way to the front of an otherwise orderly line reassures the audience that a tough approach to asylum seekers is justified. Those who push their way into the developed world are seen as undeserving because they lack the virtue of patience. Their perceived failure to obey the rules of common courtesy reinforces the sense of “otherness”, increasing the perception that such people do not belong in this society. As David Corlett argues a “more appropriate metaphor to that of a ‘refugee queue’ might be that of a ‘refugee heap’ out of which very few are plucked for resettlement” in third countries. The 1951 Convention makes no distinction between refugees who have money and those who do not,
and it should be obvious that rich and poor can be persecuted alike. Nevertheless, journalists who wish to counteract the simplistic “queue jumper” image can find themselves bogged down in complex and detailed argument about the nature of global refugee flows and the definition of a refugee.

As Corlett argues in the Australian context, when increasing numbers of asylum seekers began arriving on Australia’s coast without authorisation from mid 1999 onwards, politicians “inflamed hostile community sentiments for their own political purposes”. While official reaction was in part a reflection of community attitudes and concerns, the government failed to offer “constructive responses” to ill-founded fears. “What was missing was a national leadership that took seriously the nation’s concerns but which also posited productive responses”.

As another researcher, Sharon Pickering has noted, reporting on the unauthorised arrival of asylum seekers across national boundaries “often elides the vocabulary of war with that of crime”:

Metaphors of war justify the need to repel whatever is hostile and threatening. ‘Immigration controls’ become matters of ‘national security’; a ‘national emergency’ requires ‘full deployment’ of the armed forces on a ‘prime defence mission’ to ‘detect incursions’.

In times of war or crisis, the need for firm and decisive action can override concern for individual rights. However by any objective measure, the boat people did not present Australia with such a situation.

There were 13,015 applications for asylum lodged in Australia in the financial year 2000–01 and 12,713 in the year 1999–00. This represented a 50 per cent increase on the number of applications in the two previous financial years (8371 in 1998–99 and 8126 in 1997–98). Nevertheless, the total number of applications was still relatively small in international comparison, and the scale of the refugee and asylum seeker “problem” confronting Australia in no way justifies the alarmist language employed by politicians and sections of the media.

It is also important to note that only about one third of those 13,000 or so asylum seekers in 2000–01 arrived in Australia without a valid visa (mostly by boat although some came by air). Australia’s Migration Act required that these “unlawful non-citizens” (in the official terminology of immigration authorities) be held in detention until a positive decision was made to grant them protection, or until they were removed from Australia. On the other hand, two thirds of all asylum seekers, or around 8000 people, arrived in Australia lawfully (i.e. with a valid visitor visa) and applied for asylum after clearing immigration controls. These people lived in the community and were able to apply for work permits. These “lawful non-citizens” outnumbered detained (i.e. “unlawful”) asylum seekers by a ratio of two to one, and were (statistically) far less likely to be recognised as refugees under the 1951 Convention, but their presence was not a matter of public concern and rarely received media coverage. In other words the refugee or asylum seeker “problem” in Australia is very selectively viewed and reported — the issue is framed almost entirely by the way in which a person came to Australia and not by the validity of their claims to protection or the factors that may have forced them to flee in the first place. This is partly the direct result of policy—the detention, in remote desert camps or off-shore territories, of all asylum seekers who arrive, or seek to arrive in Australia without authorisation, renders those people dangerous in the eyes of the public. Why else would they be kept isolated behind razor wire?

**Good and bad refugees**

Edward Said has noted that “the insidious form of binary oppositions” has “infected” the public domain and it is not hard to identify the binary oppositions that dominate media reporting on asylum seekers and refugees. They are described as either “bogus” or “genuine”; “legal” or “illegal”; “lawful” or “unlawful”; “deserving” or “undeserving.”

I would add “citizen” and “non-citizen” (the bureaucratic pairing used in the official terminology of Australia’s immigration officials) to the list in order to illuminate the way in which the moral panic directed at the boat people and refugees on talkback lines and in letters to the editor is driven by notions of entitlement. Citizens are entitled to have their rights protected and to enjoy the full protection of the law. The rights of non-citizens are restricted; they can be detained indefinitely without trial and are accused of abusing the system if they seek to use the courts to advance their claim to refugee status. Citizens pay taxes and are therefore entitled to government services. Non-citizens have no such entitlements and are seen as competitors for scarce public goods such as health and education.

As people without entitlement, refugee non-citizens are only acceptable in a certain guise — as the passive and grateful recipients of the generosity, which we, as citizens, might choose to bestow. The media is comfortable with images of refugees and asylum seekers as helpless and bedraggled. In the schema of binary opposition, politicians contrast the “queue jumper” with the stereotype image of refugees “waiting patiently” in squalid refugee camps. These deserving refugees are portrayed as passive. We (the entitled citizen) can choose to bestow our generosity on them (the unentitled non-citizen), or we can choose to withhold it. In other words they are subject to our control. By contrast “boat people” arriving on Australia’s shores display a disagreeable degree of self-will. They are willing to take action to address their situation, arrive uninvited and are consequently perceived and represented as a threat.

This helps to explain why the media, and the general public, have been sympathetic to some refugees and not to others. Why, for example, the Australian public embraced Kosovar and East Timorese refugees brought to Australia for a temporary stay in 1999, but displayed great antagonism to the Iraqi and Afghan refugees arriving by boat at around the same time. The Kosovars and East Timorese were portrayed as “good” refugees while the Afghans and Iraqis were “bad”. As indicated above, I argue this had in part to do with the level of agency displayed by the refugees themselves and the degree of control exerted by Australian authorities. The more passive and under control the refugees
appear, the more sympathetic the response. Clearly it was also influenced by official attitudes toward the refugees; government leaders welcomed the Kosovars but remained hostile to on shore asylum seekers. At another level, detailed and very immediate reporting of the Kosovo conflict had given Australians some understanding of the reasons why people had been forced to seek refuge outside their home country. The media presented the war as a contained narrative with a clear aggressor (Serbia/Milosevic) and obvious victims (the Kosovars). The same could be said for East Timor. By comparison, prior to September 11, the conflict in Afghanistan, when it was reported at all, was generally portrayed as a long-running saga with no obvious beginning or endpoint. The country was generally presented as an intractable site of conflict, in which individual actors could not easily be identified or ascribed with motives. Even after September 11, when the barbarity of the Taliban regime received more detailed coverage—in particular the oppression of women—sympathy for Afghans themselves was constrained by the identification of their country as enemy territory and the home of terrorists. Similarly, coverage of Iraq tended to portray Saddam Hussein as the arch-villain (the equivalent of Milosevic), but one enduring legacy of the Gulf War is that sympathy for people suffering under his regime is tempered by the identification of the country as a whole as an aggressor and an enemy.

Conclusion: the responsibility of journalists

From the above discussion it becomes apparent that media reporting can shape public perceptions of refugees and asylum seekers and has the potential to influence policy. Journalists need to remain conscious of the responsibility which they assume when they report on vulnerable people. Compassionate and sympathetic coverage can help to promote public understanding and encourage generous assistance to refugees and others in need. Negative reporting can generate and intensify feelings of fear. Without absolving journalists and editors of responsibility for the tone and style of their reporting, it must be recognised that political actors play an important role in setting the terms of the debate.

What lessons can be drawn from this for media workers and media analysts? Firstly, it should be recognised that the media is not monolithic. At the same time, and in the same “market”, different outlets will take different approaches to a story. For example on the same weekend that the Courier Mail ran the front-page typhoid story discussed above, The Sunday Age newspaper in Melbourne carried a full page spread sympathetically detailing the stories and personal experiences of Afghan and Iraqi refugees who had made it to Australia.19

Secondly, it must be recognised that the media is as much a source of entertainment as it is a source of news and information. While the philosophical starting point of many journalists is that they work to serve the public interest, there is a commercial motive at the base of most (although not all) media enterprises that does influence editorial policy. It can, and often does, encourage a tabloid approach to issues, dumbing-down, over-simplification, stereotyping and sensationalism. Talkback radio, for example, is a staple of the media menu (whether it is journalism is another question) because it is cheap to produce and popular with listeners. Yet it has an almost unparalleled power to distort facts and exaggerate fears, reducing public debate to a succession of ill-informed rants.

One response to these problems is to demand higher ethical standards in journalism, which implies a higher degree of training, greater attention to detail and increased editorial rigour. Introducing such measures would have a financial cost, but I think that there is a strong argument that it is in the ultimate interests of both broadcasters and publishers, whether in the private or the public sector, to spend the money. In an era where the world is awash with information, for example via the Internet, but where quality control is increasingly neglected, media consumers are in search of a product that they can trust. The benefit to the bottom line may not always be apparent to publishers and shareholders, but I think it is there. The equation looks like this — greater accuracy and accountability add to the prestige of a title or brand and, in an era of channel surfing and skimming, helps to build a more dedicated and loyal readership or audience. This in turn helps to attract advertising and to justify the expense of tax payers’ money on public broadcasting. Quality reporting can provide the markers that help audiences chart their way through an ocean of information overload and a sea of media mediocrity.

As I have noted above, it is all too easy in the media to cast events in binary terms — to look for “goodies” and “badies”, “victims” and “perpetrators”, the “innocent” and the “guilty”. This does little to encourage the development of a sophisticated understanding of complex situations, or to promote the development of nuanced policy responses. As Elizabeth Ferris, Executive Secretary for International Relations at the World Council of Churches notes, this approach is often encouraged by humanitarian agencies themselves:

“It’s very effective … in fund-raising to show images of children, who are suffering, who are hungry, with the unspoken and often spoken message that by contributing money you can ease the situation of this child.”

At the heart of the issue is the double-edged response that media reporting on refugee issues can invite — compassion and pressure for the protection “of” refugees on the one hand — fear and the desire for protection “from” refugees on the other. When relief agencies take journalists to refugee camps, they often do so with the aim of raising cash to fund their operations. But this noble intention can go astray. If the outcome is a report that shows a situation of despair and desperation it can engender “compassion fatigue”. Alternatively, it might result in short term gain — donations — but serve in the long-term to confirm stereotypes about refugees. If media reporting persists in reinforcing images of refugees as passive innocents, as “smiling and very grateful and quiet,” then audiences in the developed world will continue to be disconcerted when they discover that the real refugees who make it to their
Shores do not fit the model. To portray refugees as passive innocents sheltering patiently in squalid camps is to fulfil one half of Edward Said's "insidious" binary opposition. The flip side of that coin is the stereotype of the queue jumper. As Elizabeth Ferris argues, in a challenge to us as journalists, perhaps it is time to portray refugees as survivors rather than victims:

Even in some of these most desperate situations you find incredible stories of hope. You find stories of you know people hiding members of a persecuted ethnic group, or people risking unpopular decisions of standing up for others ... [refugees] are strong people, these are determined, resilient people who can escape from unbearable situations and often times carry their children through weeks of walking through the bush to reach safety.\(^{21}\)

For journalists covering refugee issues, it is essential to remember that we are reporting about people and to reflect carefully on the way in which we represent them. It is equally important to reflect on the type of imagery we employ — both verbal and visual — and to consider our choice of words and our use of terminology with care. When faced with talk of a refugee "crisis" from the ranks of government or from our colleagues elsewhere in the media, it is our job to gather up the facts as best we can and to analyse whether such talk is warranted — and if it is not, then we must seek to offer a sober and more rational view of the situation. These things are integral to our public responsibility to report with integrity. We owe it both to our audiences and to the refugees, asylum seekers and displaced people about whom we write.

Notes

1. Peter Mares is a journalist with Radio Australia's regional current affairs programme Asia Pacific and a visiting fellow with the Institute for Social Research at Swinburne University of Technology in Melbourne. He is the author of Borderline: Australia's response to refugees and asylum seekers in the wake of the Tampa (UNSW Press 2002). This paper was presented at the 11th AMIC Annual Conference, 'Media, Terrorism and a Culture of Peace', Fremantel, Australia, 26–28 June 2002 and is adapted from a chapter in Edward Newman and Joanne van Selm (editors) Refugees and Human Displacement in Contemporary International Relations, UN University Press, Tokyo, 2003. AMIC would like to thank UNUP for permission to print this version here.

2. Between November 1989 and November 2001, 259 boats landed in Australia without authorisation, carrying a total of 13,489 people. Seventy per cent of those people arrived after July 1999 as smugglers began organising bigger boats carrying more passengers, representing a quantitative and qualitative shift in the nature of the problem. From mid 1999 onwards the average rate of arrival was around 335 people per month. However immediately prior to the Tampa affair in August 2001, more than 1200 people arrived within the space of one month.


4. For discussion of this issue see Henderson, Gerard "Unleashing a 'sleeper' issue: ethnic suspicion", The Age, 18.9.01.

5. See Atkins, Dennis, “PM links terror to asylum seekers”, Herald Sun (Melbourne) 7.11.2001. For a defence on Howard's statement see Blair Tim, "Beware of terrorists in refugee clothing", The Australian, 8.11.01.


8. For a detailed analysis of the 'Kids Overboard' affair see Weller, Patrick, Don't Tell the Prime Minister, Short Books, Melbourne, 2002.


10. "No human face for boat people", The Age 18.4.02.

11. McKinnon, Michael, "Typhoid found in refugee centres" The Courier Mail (Brisbane) 23.6.01.

12. Mackinolty, Chips, "Detention curbs disease risk, says Ruddock", The Age (Melbourne) 2.2.01.

13. McKinnon, Michael, "Why the fences won't come down" The Courier Mail (Brisbane) 23.6.01.


15. Ibid.


21. Ibid.

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