

Last update: 10 February 2015

Sort the myths from the facts about refugees and asylum seekers with our FAQ.

Asylum seeker, refugee or migrant: What's the difference?

An 'asylum seeker' is someone who is seeking protection but has not yet had their refugee claim determined by an official. In other words, they might be a refugee, but we do not yet know because no one has heard and evaluated their claim.

A 'refugee' is someone who has a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of their race, religion, nationality, political opinion or membership of a particular social group, and

who can't or can't safely return to their country of origin. For more information, see our factsheet on refugees and asylum seekers.



Under international law, Australia is responsible for upholding the human rights of asylum seekers it sends offshore. Moving refugees to other territories and hiring private contractors to manage offshore centres does not change Australia's international legal responsibilities.