

# Views sought on refugee fees

Parliament's Migration Committee is embarking on its second review in three years of a controversial Federal Government regulation affecting people applying for refugee status in Australia.

Migration Regulation 4.31B imposes a \$1000 fee on people who have been refused a Protection Visa in the first instance and who then appeal unsuccessfully to the Refugee Review Tribunal. The fee applies only to unsuccessful appellants.

The fee, introduced by the Government in 1997, is designed to be a deterrent to non-genuine review applications. It was introduced along with a number of other measures to address perceived abuse in the refugee application process.

When it was first introduced the move was subject to an initial two-year time limit (sunset clause), with its effect to be reviewed by the Migration Committee.

That review was conducted in the first half of 1999, with a report tabled in Parliament in May that year. A majority of the Committee recommended that the regulation be retained, but that an additional three-year sunset clause come into effect from 1 July 1999. (A minority report recommended that the fee be abolished.)

The sunset period was subsequently reduced to two years, expiring on 30 June 2001, with the intent of further review by the Migration Committee.

That review is now under way, with the Minister for Immigration, Philip Ruddock, recently asking the Committee to report on the operation of the regulation and whether the fee should continue.

**Individuals and organisations interested in making a submission to the inquiry can contact the Joint Standing Committee on Migration on (02) 6277 4560, via email at: [jscm@aph.gov.au](mailto:jscm@aph.gov.au), or get more information by visiting the Committee's web site at: [www.aph.gov.au/house/committee/MIG/Regulation2001/index.htm](http://www.aph.gov.au/house/committee/MIG/Regulation2001/index.htm)**

*Continued from page 21*

## Foreign Affairs Sub-Committee

Chair: David Jull (Member for Fadden, Queensland)  
Deputy Chair: Brenda Gibbs (Senator for Queensland)  
Current inquiry: Australia's relations with the Middle East  
Other activities: Australian Government Loans to Papua New Guinea

The Foreign Affairs Sub-Committee is nearing the end of a searching year-long inquiry into all aspects of Australia's relations with Middle East and Gulf nations.

Trade issues have dominated the evidence received by the Sub-Committee. More controversial have been views on our contribution to the Arab-Israeli peace process, the role of the UN in the region (including the weapons inspection process and sanctions on Iraq) and human rights issues. Other issues have included migration, international training and education, and how to benefit from our growing social and cultural links with the region.

Final hearings are currently being conducted and tabling of the Committee's report and recommendations is expected in the Spring session of Parliament.

Prior to that the Sub-Committee is expected to investigate and report on a loan from the Australian Government to Papua New Guinea.

Under rules attached to the International Monetary Agreements Act, the Government must table a National Interest Statement (NIS) in Parliament whenever certain types of loans are made. The NIS explains the loan and why it is in Australia's national foreign policy, trade or economic interest. Any NIS tabled is automatically referred to the Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade Committee for inquiry and report within two months.

The Foreign Affairs Sub-Committee reported in October 2000 on another loan to PNG, for \$133 million.

**For further information on the Foreign Affairs Sub-Committee and its inquiries visit: [www.aph.gov.au/house/committee/jfadt](http://www.aph.gov.au/house/committee/jfadt) or call: (02) 6277 2313**

## Human Rights Sub-Committee

Chair: Peter Nugent (Member for Aston, Vic)  
Deputy Chair: Colin Hollis (Member for Throsby, NSW)  
Current inquiry: Link between aid and human rights  
Recent report: Freedom of Religion (*Conviction with Compassion*)  
Other activities: Inspection of immigration detention centres

Australia's immigration detention centres have generated more than their share of publicity in the last 12 months, sparking a recent series of inspection visits by the Human Rights Sub-Committee.

Visits included facilities in Derby, Broome, Port Hedland and Perth in WA, Woomera in SA and Villawood in NSW. The Sub-Committee met with management, workers and detainees at each venue. It will report in the Autumn sittings.

The Sub-Committee's recent Freedom of Religion report *Conviction with Compassion* drew some media attention, not all of it accurate, particularly in relation to its section on cults.

Submissions are currently being received for a new inquiry on the use of various forms of foreign aid to advance human rights in developing nations.

**For further information on the Human Rights Sub-Committee's current inquiry into the link between aid and human rights visit: [www.aph.gov.au/house/committee/jfadt/HR\\_Aid/Aidindex.htm](http://www.aph.gov.au/house/committee/jfadt/HR_Aid/Aidindex.htm) or call: (02) 6277 2313**

