

Project SafeCom Inc. - Information Sheet 2

Project SafeCom: a summary of what we do

Since the TAMPA days have maintained a tremendous 'e-pressure' on Federal Labor, and have been successful together with the various groups and many individuals in 'causing' full attention for refugee policies as a central issue to *the welfare of Labor*; at least on one occasion, **our messages** of concern to Federal ALP members prior to the second reading of a Migration Amendment Bill, **were tabled and/or summarised in the ALP caucus** at a discussion about the amendments.

We have also expressed a clear position about the Iraq invasion by the US/UK/Australian alliance. Our extremely concerned **note to government MP's about the ASIO Bill was read out in Parliament** during the second reading of the ASIO legislation in 2003 (Greens' MP Michael Organ).

We have built consistent and good rapport with several selected journalists in Australian media as well as the UK Guardian - we **took part in radio and TV interviews in Australia and Singapore** during the Christmas 2002 fires in detention centres and on many other occasions:

<http://www.safecom.org/google-easter.htm>

In WA as well as the remainder of Australia we have cemented a firm place as an outspoken, strong and unambiguous voice amongst refugee groups from the left as well from more traditional viewpoints: our messages and points presented in discussions consistently receive strong positive feedback and affirmation;

After the Christmas 2002 Baxter detention centre fires, our Coordinator's statement: "I'm delighted it burns, and I hope it burns right down to the ground..." was **printed in at least** (only counting those with an online version) **33 newspapers in seven countries within 3 days**.

We **brought into the public the "missing photos" of the Children Overboard incident** and posted them on our website - the news was taken up by many Australian newspapers, and The Australian featured some of the photos in a major article in July 2003.

<http://www.safecom.org/kids-overboard.htm>

We're **working with the Japanese "Realiser Magazine"** <http://www.realiser.org/> on an article about the Children Overboard incident - and a **Norwegian Magazine "Ikkevold"** <http://www.ikkevold.no/> about an article on Australia's refugee policies since Tampa.

With our screening of BBC Documentary "Australia's Pacific Solution" (Sarah McDonald, Kate Durham) in January 2003 - at the Fremantle Film and Television Institute, where we were able to recruit both **Senator Andrew Bartlett** and ALP's Fremantle representative **Dr Carmen Lawrence as keynote speakers**.

<http://www.safecom.org/fti-speech.htm>

We held a weekend **Symposium "The Cost, the Carnage and The Bill"** at the University of Western Australia in September 2003 - with keynote speakers Julian Burnside QC, psychiatrist Louise Newman, Hazara spokesman Hassan Ghulam, former Woomera teacher Tom Mann, and MP's Carmen Lawrence, Andrew Bartlett and Kerry Nettle.

<http://www.safecom.org/symposium03.htm>

During January/February 2004 Project SafeCom's coordinator Jack Smit **toured refugee groups around Australia**, through from Adelaide, Melbourne, Sydney, Brisbane, Sunshine Coast and Albury-Wodonga, sharing some activist approaches and movies/documentaries from the Project SafeCom library.

<http://www.safecom.org/ontheroad.htm>

During this tour we also shared some strategies for the 2004 federal election, as outlined at our still to be completed **Parliament for Refugees** section on our website: <http://www.parliamentforrefugees.com/>

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The tour concluded at the 2004 **Rural Australians for Refugees Conference**, where Jack **conducted two workshops**: <http://www.safecom.org/albury-2004.htm>

Project SafeCom: mandate and direction

Narrogin WA, October 2003 - While Project SafeCom is set up as a **community development project**, aimed at establishing a generic **open sustainable technology training and learning farm community** - and as such an educational institution - its steering committee determines and endorses its active and operational directions (for example, focusing on social justice issues relating to refugees and asylum seekers) at the start of every financial year.

From the Constitution: - The vision of Project SafeCom is laid out in the constitution as *"...a safe community for people of any for people of any race, gender, creed or nationality, who are displaced as a result of Wars or Political, Social, Climatological, Ecological and Geological upheaval and/or Disaster; and for other users as and when appropriate."*

This vision structure - even while any physical property or farm is not at all a reality as yet - enables Project SafeCom to **operate and develop also beyond refugee issues** if appropriate and if directed to do so by the steering committee. Project SafeCom was incorporated in December 2001 as a response to the Howard policies and shift in direction in government treatment of refugees. It has its own Australian Business Number and it is currently seeking tax-free status and tax-deductibility from the ATO for donations and gifts as an educational institution.

Website - The Project SafeCom website is a very popular resource for information about refugee issues since the "Tampa election". **More than 123 new and returning visitors use the website** each day. There are about 220 pages on the website, most of them in the refugee section.

<http://www.safecom.org/whatsnew.htm>

The Library and Information Service of Western Australia has listed the Project SafeCom website as **"a website of cultural and historical significance in Western Australia"** and Project SafeCom is listed in the **Western Australian Multicultural Services Directory**.

Project SafeCom: Networking around Australia

There are about 70 lists, either at Yahoo!Groups or at topica.com, established by Australian refugee groups. Project SafeCom is **the only group in Australia** who posts messages and contributes to debate and discussion **on all these groups and lists**. Using a specially designed program by refugee activists - originally designed to exert email pressure on MP's and Senators, it's called "Senator Slapper" - Project SafeCom's occasional notifications and news alerts reach an estimated 12,000 people who subscribe to all these groups.

Newsletter - The (usually daily) **Refugee News and Updates newsletter** at

<http://www.topica.com/lists/safecom/read/>

is read by about 360 subscribers (March 2004). Journalists from Australia as well as Malaysia, Singapore, students and staff from Universities, activists, friends of refugees, NGO's and government department representatives subscribe to this free service.

Supporters - There are about **4200 people in the Project SafeCom** database, that is, people who have written to Project SafeCom, who have sent a comment via the website form or asked a question, asked for contacts so they could write to detainees, have purchased a product from the shop at <http://www.safecom.org/products.htm> or who have financially supported Project SafeCom - as well as other known refugee advocates and organisations.

Members - In March 2004 Project SafeCom's association had about 70 registered members in many places - in Western Australia, Queensland, South Australia, the Northern Territory, Victoria and New South Wales - but also in Sweden and Dallas, USA. Project SafeCom operates through its mostly **full-time volunteer coordinator**, working from its WA based operations.

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