

Project SafeCom News and Updates

Sunday, 26 July 2015

Subscribe and become a member here: <http://www.safecom.org.au/ref-member.htm>

1. Labor opens itself to hypocrisy claims as it ditches old songsheet on boat turn-backs
2. EDITORIAL: Shorten's backflip on boat turn-backs is reprehensible
3. The Saturday Paper: Asylum seekers and leadership head ALP National Conference
4. Bill Shorten's turn-back policy vulnerable on two fronts
5. Richard Marles wants Labor to adopt boat turn-backs under party's asylum seeker policy
6. Bill Shorten wants Labor to adopt boat turn-backs under party's asylum seeker policy
7. Bill Shorten faces stiff opposition from Labor's left faction on boat turn-backs about-face
8. Warning voters will abandon Labor over boat turn-backs as Left thrown refugee sweetener
9. Shorten faces test over plan to adopt Coalition's asylum boat turnback policy
10. Labor frontbencher Stephen Conroy predicts 'very close' vote over Bill Shorten's support for boat turn-backs
11. Asylum seeker policy and boat turnbacks breaking Labor's heart
12. Labor's Anthony Albanese has 'real concerns' about Bill Shorten's shift on asylum turn-backs
13. Anthony Albanese criticises Bill Shorten's handling of boat turn-backs policy
14. Anthony Albanese surprised by Bill Shorten's boat turnbacks announcement
15. Anthony Albanese warns Labor against appealing to 'dark side' on turnbacks
16. Bill Shorten promises 'safe and humane' asylum seeker policy amid split over boat turn-backs
17. Bill Shorten poised to win Labor conference support for boat turnbacks
18. Bill Shorten faces tough questions as asylum policies debated at ALP national conference
19. Labor conference: Party will be 'condemned by history' if boats restart: Richard Marles
20. First the booing, then a leader's triumph: ALP conference ritual observed
21. Accepting Turn Backs Is About Helping Labor Not Asylum Seekers, Says Refugee Body
22. Bill Shorten outlines 'new direction' for Labor's immigration policies
23. Bill Shorten taunts Tony Abbott on climate but faces boats hurdle
24. Richard Marles promises border protection 'transparency', UNHCR backing of asylum seeker approach
25. Labor delegates vote down ban on asylum seeker boat turn-backs
26. Shorten wins freedom to use boat turnbacks, but leadership split on issue
27. Bill Shorten says he will not shirk hard decisions on asylum
28. Protesters dragged out of Labor national conference after disrupting immigration debate
29. Tanya Plibersek in 'witness protection' over boats at Labor's national conference
30. Shorten prevails on boat turnbacks but faces gay marriage fight

1. Labor opens itself to hypocrisy claims as it ditches old songsheet on boat turn-backs

The Age
July 23, 2015 - 12:19PM
Nicole Hasham

Labor leader Bill Shorten's backflip on turning back asylum seeker boats opens the party to claims of hypocrisy, and is at odds with the ALP's long-standing opposition to the policy.

The ALP has criticised the measure on the grounds that it would be ineffective and unworkable, unsafe for asylum seekers and border protection officials and would cause diplomatic problems with Indonesia.

Labor backbencher and former speaker Anna Burke has warned voters may abandon the party following Mr Shorten's decision.

Here are 13 quotes or comments that could come back to haunt Labor MPs:

- • September 2011: Immigration minister Chris Bowen questioned the Coalition's turn-back policy and its criticism of Labor's proposed Malaysia solution:

"The evidence is overwhelming that turning back the boats is a crude policy that is neither safe nor viable. Yet this is where the elegance of the Malaysia transfer arrangement shines through -- turning back people in a safe and orderly way."

- • September 2011: Mr Bowen questioned the Coalition's pledge to turn asylum seeker boats towards Indonesia – a country which is not a signatory to the United Nations Refugee Convention.

- • October 2011: Prime minister Julia Gillard said opposition leader Tony Abbott's pledge to "turn back the boats" can't be done because the navy has warned it will put at risk the lives of Australian sailors. The navy had told a Senate inquiry that turning back the boats was dangerous because of the risk of fires, sabotage and people jumping in the water.

- • March 2012: Immigration minister Chris Bowen accused Mr Abbott of being "in denial" over his refusal to accept Indonesia's rejection of his policy to turn back asylum-seeker boats.

"What more does Tony Abbott need to hear to know Indonesia will have nothing to do with towing back boats? "He needs to accept reality," Mr Bowen said.

In January 2014, Indonesia's military said it had reached a private agreement with the Australian Defence Force to accept turned-backs boats to defuse the diplomatic row over the policy.

- • July 2012: Ms Gillard said Mr Abbott's plan "keeps running into the wisdom from senior Defence Force personnel who say it will put the lives of Australians at risk".

- • July 2013: Immigration minister Tony Burke said the Coalition's plan to increase offshore processing was effectively an admission "that turning back the boats won't work".

- • September 2013: The Abbott government is elected. It is criticised for refusing to reveal whether it is turning asylum seeker boats around. Acting opposition leader Chris Bowen said "the new government has worked out that turn-backs are going to be harder than they said they would be and they, therefore, won't be telling the Australian people when they're attempted".

- • November 2013: New Labor leader Bill Shorten declared "the Abbott government's border protection policy is in tatters," after immigration minister Scott Morrison revealed that Indonesia had twice rejected requests from the Abbott government to accept asylum seekers rescued by Australian authorities.

- • November 2013: Labor's immigration spokesman Richard Marles said the government's foreign policy "is in a state of disarray" after Indonesia refused to accept the turn-backs. "We have had Indonesia from day one saying that they won't accept tow-backs. It was inevitably going to fail. And that's what we saw."

- • October 2014: Mr Marles said if Indonesia was supportive of having boats turned back by Australian authorities, then Labor would consider it. Backbencher Stephen Jones said Labor's policy would not change and frontbencher Andrew Leigh said he remained "deeply concerned" about the diplomatic impact of the policy.

- • October 2014: Asked if turn-backs were having an impact on stopping deaths at sea, Mr Shorten said: "No, we don't see that the argument has been made or the evidence has been made out about boat turn-backs. Labor's policy hasn't changed."

- • October 2014: Mr Shorten addressed the issue at a caucus meeting, telling MPs the party's policy would not shift.

"I want to make it crystal clear there has been no change to Labor's policy on Tony Abbott's secret turn-backs. I can't be clearer than that," he said. "Labor is in favour of what works, what saves lives at sea, and Labor's regional arrangements have been working."

• • July 2015: Mr Shorten said it was clear that a combination of regional resettlement, offshore processing and turning back boats was defeating people smugglers.

"I can no longer escape the conclusion that, if Labor forms government, it needs to have all the options on the table," Mr Shorten told ABC television.

"It's not easy, though, because it involves the admission, I think, that mistakes were made when Labor was last in government."

<http://www.theage.com.au/federal-politics/political-news/labor-opens-itself-to-hypocrisy-claims-as-it-ditches-old-songsheet-on-boat-turnbacks-20150723-giiovp.html>

2. EDITORIAL: Shorten's backflip on boat turn-backs is reprehensible

The Age
July 24, 2015 - 12:15AM

In case anyone has forgotten, it was the Australian Labor Party that introduced banishment to Nauru and Manus Island as a way of halting the flow of boats carrying asylum seekers and economic migrants to our shores. And it was Labor under Kevin Rudd that declared "asylum seekers who come here by boat will never be settled in Australia". That uncompromising "solution", as some might glorify it, has been the most profound deterrent on people-trafficking in this region.

Turning back boats was an addendum to that policy. It was introduced by the Abbott government in late 2013, initially by towing boats to Indonesian waters, then transferring people into orange vessels and pointing them back to Indonesia. Later variations include detaining people on Australian vessels in international waters before handing them to authorities from other countries; using Australian naval vessels to sail asylum seekers directly to ports in their home countries; and, more recently, paying cash to persuade an Indonesian boat crew to turn their boat around and go back.

None of this is acceptable. Not the offshore processing system, nor the eternal banishment from Australia. Not the reprehensible prison-like conditions on Nauru and Manus Island, which are designed to crush people's spirits and, thus, deter others who might attempt the ocean journey. And certainly unacceptable, in our view, is the interception, towing or turning back of boats, let alone handing people back to those same countries which they believe perpetrate persecution, are complicit in such oppression, or are unable or unwilling to protect them from harm and discrimination.

Bill Shorten this weekend will ask the Australian Labor Party's national conference to formally approve a dramatic shift in policy and adopt the turn-back strategy of the Abbott government. We believe the policy is morally repugnant, and that Labor's rationale is flawed.

Richard Marles, Labor's spokesman on immigration, contends that while most people who attempt the sea journey from Indonesia to Australia are genuine refugees, this final leg "is not a flight from persecution. No one is fleeing persecution in Indonesia". This is simplistic rubbish. Ask Papua New Guinea about refugees who have fled oppressive authorities or racial and religious violence in West Papua and other eastern provinces. More importantly, however, we remind Mr Marles that superior courts around the world have confirmed repeatedly that it does not matter whether a refugee has come via one country or many to seek asylum. The claim must be assessed, on its merits, by the country where it is sought.

We believe this nation should uphold its obligations under international law, with respect paid to the needs of each person who seeks assistance. For that reason, The Age does not support turning back asylum seeker boats. Repelling people at sea, or depositing them in other countries, prematurely terminates their claims for protection. This is a ruthless and despicable relinquishment of Australia's obligations. While the offshore detention system provides for some processing of refugee claims, it is terribly flawed, not least in principle.

We believe in justice, and in extending compassion and dignity to people who seek refuge. To that end, we believe processing of refugee claims and detention arrangements should be conducted in Australia, by Australian authorities, and with the prospect of permanent settlement here for those who demonstrate legitimate claims. The Age is not naive enough to presume that this could be adopted without the risk of a sudden flood of boats heading to our shores. It is why we have always argued for a regional solution, rather than a Fortress Australia mentality.

If Labor adopts Mr Shorten's proposal, it will suggest a party that too readily ditches important principles for political gain.

<http://www.theage.com.au/comment/the-age-editorial/shortens-backflip-on-boat-turnbacks-is-reprehensible-20150723-giiymr.html>

3. The Saturday Paper: Asylum seekers and leadership head ALP National Conference

Asylum-seeker policy may dominate debate at this weekend's ALP conference, but an underlying theme is who'll take the leadership reins post-Shorten.

The Saturday Paper
Jul 25, 2015
Sophie Morris

For some time, Bill Shorten has been working up to Labor's breathtaking about-face on turning back asylum-seeker boats attempting to reach Australia.

As the government came under fire in mid-June over payments to people smugglers, Shorten told caucus that Labor would not cede the issue to the Coalition. "We made mistakes in this area and we have learned the difficult lessons of the past," he told a meeting of Labor MPs on June 16.

He dropped another big hint in a speech in parliament during the final sitting week before the winter break. "Labor stands resolutely to make sure that the dangerous sea voyage from Java to Christmas Island remains closed," he said. "As I have said before, Labor learnt lessons from its time in government."

Even as some MPs on the Left refused to countenance that turn-backs could be an option, the deal was being done to shore up frontbench support. Immigration spokesman Richard Marles has made his case in conversations with senior frontbenchers, saying that pragmatism and politics dictate turn-backs must be on the table and that Labor could promise more transparency, even publicising turn-backs to send a message to people smugglers.

Shadow cabinet approved the shift in recent weeks and Shorten announced it on Wednesday, nine months after slapping down Marles for suggesting it.

Now Shorten is relying on his lieutenants to deliver the numbers on the floor of the ALP conference this weekend to avoid humiliating defeat. His goal is to leave the party's platform blank on the issue, allowing future Labor governments room to adopt the controversial policy, which it has previously argued has risked lives and compromised Australia's relationship with Indonesia.

Those lieutenants include the people who are positioning themselves to one day take his job: Anthony Albanese and Tanya Plibersek from the party's Left, Chris Bowen and Tony Burke from the Right. Unusually, neither the Right nor the Left faction controls the numbers among the 397 parliamentary, trade union and rank-and-file delegates at this conference, making outcomes less predictable.

Full story at <https://www.thesaturdaypaper.com.au/news/politics/2015/07/25/asylum-seekers-and-leadership-head-alp-national-conference/14377464002166>

4. Bill Shorten's turn-back policy vulnerable on two fronts

Sydney Morning Herald
July 23, 2015 - 5:55PM
Michael Gordon

The problem at the heart of Labor's border protection policy is that Bill Shorten wants to replicate Tony Abbott's boats policy without the sharp and ugly edges: the secrecy, the selfishness and the cruelty.

The stated objective is to avoid deaths at sea, but the political aim is to neutralise one of Abbott's most potent political weapons at the federal election due next year: the claim that only he has the mettle to stop the boats.

By announcing the shift before Labor's national conference debates asylum seeker policy on Saturday, Shorten is sending a blunt message to those within the party who are alarmed that he would embrace the idea of turning back boats intercepted at sea.

If they rebel against the policy and were to prevail – an extremely unlikely prospect – they would deliver a potentially fatal blow to his prospects of becoming prime minister. This is why the expediency of the policy extends to the pre-emptive way it was announced.

The context is purely political - to restrict the areas of difference to those where Shorten feels more comfortable, like climate change - but the turn-back policy is vulnerable on two fronts.

The first front is where it deviates from the Coalition's militaristic model, opening Shorten to the charge that his is a pale imitation of the policy that stopped the boats.

Richard Marles, Labor's immigration spokesman, says the public is entitled to know the facts about turn-backs and what is happening in detention centres; Abbott and Immigration Minister Peter Dutton say secrecy is essential.

Marles says Labor will be more engaged with the world in responding to the biggest humanitarian crisis since the Second World War, yet turn-backs are an act of unilateralism and the antithesis of global co-operation.

Marles says people can be humanely kept in indefinite detention on Nauru and Manus Island, when this has proved a contradiction in terms. The principle underpinning the transfer of vulnerable people to these places is simple: the harsher the conditions, the more effective the deterrent.

The second front is where the policy of turn-backs deviates from best international practice, as articulated by the UNHCR, the refugee agency whose views would be afforded much more weight if Labor wins power.

As the agency's regional office in Canberra reiterated on Thursday, turn-backs are contrary to the spirit of the 1951 Refugee Convention, set a very bad example for other countries, and appear to be taking place without adequate consideration of an individual's legal right to seek protection.

Shorten's strategy is to neutralise the issue before the election and transition to something better, that still minimises the risk of deaths at sea, if he wins power. If he needs a reminder of the scale of the task, Saturday's debate should provide one.

<http://www.smh.com.au/federal-politics/political-opinion/bill-shortens-turnback-policy-vulnerable-on-two-fronts-20150723-gij2qh.html>

5. Richard Marles wants Labor to adopt boat turn-backs under party's asylum seeker policy

ABC News Online

By political reporter Eliza Borrello

First posted Wed 22 Jul 2015, 4:34pm

Updated Wed 22 Jul 2015, 5:00pm

Labor's immigration spokesman Richard Marles will push for the party to change its asylum seeker policy to support boat turn-backs.

The news was revealed in a soon-to-be-published opinion piece Mr Marles wrote for the Herald Sun newspaper.

"Despite best intentions, a terrible loss of life took place on Labor's watch," he wrote.

"We did not get it right then but we are very clear now about making sure we don't repeat those mistakes.

"Offshore processing and regional resettlement together with the Coalition's policy of turnbacks is what actually stopped the boats.

"I believe, provided it can be done safely, a future Labor government must have the option to undertake turn-backs."

The policy is expected to be fought fiercely by Labor's left faction at its national conference this weekend.

Within minutes of quotes from Mr Marles' piece being published, former Labor MP Steve Gibbons criticised the stance on Twitter.

"The 'turn back the boats' policy will be driven by those gutless Western Suburbs MP's [sic] who let 'red-necks' determine Labor policy!" Mr Gibbons tweeted.

Mr Marles has pre-emptively defended his position in the opinion piece.

"This is not about pandering to the politics of fear, it is about having a sensible, safe set of policies that will stop people from dying."

<http://www.abc.net.au/news/2015-07-22/richard-marles-wants-labor-to-adopt-asylum-boat-turn-backs/6640990>

6. Bill Shorten wants Labor to adopt boat turn-backs under party's asylum seeker policy

ABC News Online

By political reporter Eliza Borrello

First posted Wed 22 Jul 2015, 4:34pm

Updated Wed 22 Jul 2015, 7:09pm

Opposition Leader Bill Shorten says he has had to face the truth that turning back people smuggling boats has saved lives, confirming he wants Labor to change its asylum seeker policy and support turn-backs.

The move is expected to be met with fierce opposition by members of the ALP's left faction at its national conference this weekend, but Mr Shorten said a turn-backs policy was needed to save lives.

"Labor wants to defeat the people smugglers and we want to prevent drownings at sea," he told 7.30.

"Therefore one of the options which we believe has to be on the table, if we're given the privilege of forming government, has to be the option to turn back boats.

"It's not easy, though, because it involves the admission, I think, that mistakes were made when Labor was last in government," he added.

"And for myself, if I want to be the leader of this nation, I've got to be able to face the truth and the truth for me is that if we have policies in place which gives sustenance and support to people smugglers to exploit vulnerable people, where they put these vulnerable people on unsafe boats and then people drown at sea, I can't support any policies which do that."

News of the move was revealed in an opinion piece Labor's immigration spokesman Richard Marles wrote for the Herald Sun newspaper.

"Despite best intentions, a terrible loss of life took place on Labor's watch," he wrote.

"We did not get it right then but we are very clear now about making sure we don't repeat those mistakes.

"Offshore processing and regional resettlement together with the Coalition's policy of turn-backs is what actually stopped the boats.

"I believe, provided it can be done safely, a future Labor government must have the option to undertake turn-backs."

Shorten hints at lifting of refugee intake

Mr Shorten also hinted that Labor would lift Australia's refugee intake if it formed government, saying he would have more to say on the issue in coming days.

"Boat turn-backs is only one of the issues in a pretty complex situation. What we have is more displaced people, more refugees than the world has ever seen," he said.

"Australia should do its fair share, and that's why we're prepared to consider things which previously we might not have, because we get that it's a big problem and we've got to be humane and we've got to make sure that the issue is not refugees, the issue is making sure people are safe."

Within minutes of quotes from Mr Marles' piece being published, former Labor MP Steve Gibbons criticised the stance on Twitter.

"The 'turn back the boats' policy will be driven by those gutless Western Suburbs MP's [sic] who let 'red-necks' determine Labor policy!" Mr Gibbons tweeted.

Mr Marles pre-emptively defended his position in the opinion piece. "This is not about pandering to the politics of fear, it is about having a sensible, safe set of policies that will stop people from dying."

Immigration Minister Peter Dutton said Labor remained weak on border protection. "Labor giving themselves the 'option' to turn back boats is what they promise at every election," he tweeted. Greens senator Sarah Hanson-Young was also critical of the change in Labor's position. "Boat turn-backs are all about pushing refugees away, to let them die in someone else's waters," she tweeted.

"Labor's capitulation to Abbott won't end well."

<http://www.abc.net.au/news/2015-07-22/bill-shorten-wants-labor-to-adopt-asylum-boat-turn-backs/6640990>

7. Bill Shorten faces stiff opposition from Labor's left faction on boat turn-backs about-face

ABC News Online

By political reporter Eliza Borrello

First posted Wed 22 Jul 2015, 10:29pm

Updated Thu 23 Jul 2015, 8:29am

Opposition Leader Bill Shorten will come up against stiff opposition at the ALP's national conference this weekend when he tries to convince his party to support turning back asylum seeker boats.

Mr Shorten confirmed he had changed his mind on the policy on the ABC's 7.30 program on Wednesday night.

"I can no longer escape the conclusion that Labor, if we form a government, needs to have all the options on the table," Mr Shorten said.

He said he now believed the Coalition's policy of turning back asylum seeker boats, in conjunction with resettling asylum seekers offshore, had worked.

"It's not easy, though, because it involves the admission, I think, that mistakes were made when Labor was last in government," he said.

"If I want to be the leader of this nation, I've got to be able to face the truth. And the truth for me is that if we have policies in place which gives sustenance and support to people smugglers to exploit vulnerable people, where they put these vulnerable people on unsafe boats and then people drown at sea, I can't support any policies which do that."

Federal MP Andrew Giles, from Labor's left faction, confirmed the policy backflip would be fought when the ALP meets to discuss its policy platforms this weekend.

"I will be arguing for a policy that does not support turn-backs," Mr Giles said.

"I'm concerned about the breach, as I see it, of international law."

Another Labor MP, Anna Burke, said she was very disappointed by the Opposition Leader's announcement.

"I'm not in a position to support that policy," Ms Burke said.

"I don't think there's a need to be trumpeting turn-backs."

She argued the opposition should be supporting a more humane approach.

"I do think that there will be a lot of people this morning trying to weigh up whether they'll be able to vote for Labor at the next election," Ms Burke said.

Greens senator Sarah Hanson-Young said Mr Shorten was making a big mistake.

"All it [the turn-backs policy] does is push vulnerable refugees over the horizon to die in somebody else's waters," she said.

"Many Labor supporters will be heartbroken."

Paul Power from the Refugee Council of Australia accused Mr Shorten and his immigration spokesman Richard Marles, who has written an opinion piece supporting turn-backs, of "pandering to the politics of fear".

"The Australian Labor Party, which aspires to be a party of the centre, is being asked by its leader to abandon its principles of fairness, compassion and respect for international law and copy the Liberal-National Coalition's policy of forcing back people seeking protection from persecution," Mr Power said.

Immigration Minister Peter Dutton said Labor was only putting forward the "option" of turn-backs and questioned whether the party would follow through.

"This is not a definite policy proposal," he said.

"The Labor Party's track record of failure when it comes to border protection, I think, should sound alarm bells."

Mr Shorten also indicated that if elected he might increase Australia's refugee intake.

"We'll have more to say on this ... I do believe we can probably take more refugees."

Mr Shorten's announcement on turn-backs came just days after a suspected asylum boat was spotted off the coast of Dampier in Western Australia.

The boat, carrying what are believed to be Vietnamese asylum seekers, was spotted by crew members on an oil tanker at first light on Monday morning about 150 kilometres offshore.

Water police were called in to help locate it, and the ABC understands an Australian Navy boat followed later.

Prime Minister Tony Abbott has refused to provide any details in response to the reports, saying it is an "iron law" of his Government not to comment on operational matters.

<http://www.abc.net.au/news/2015-07-23/bill-shorten-faces-stiff-opposition-from-labor-left-on-turnbacks/6641350>

8. Warning voters will abandon Labor over boat turn-backs as Left thrown refugee sweetener

Sydney Morning Herald
July 23, 2015 - 9:14AM
James Massola and Rick Feneley
with Jane Lee

Labor will double Australia's refugee intake to 27,000 people as part of a suite of new immigration policies, which also includes turning back asylum seekers boats.

And while some in the party's Left faction are preparing for a fierce fight over the issue, at least one factional powerbroker from the Left - who asked not be named – predicted the adoption of a boat turn-backs policy would be allowed by this weekend's national conference.

"[Labor leader Bill Shorten] won't lose it [the vote on turn-backs] I don't think, though there will be substantial opposition. But some in the Left actually support turn-backs," the Left powerbroker said.

However, Labor backbencher and former speaker Anna Burke warned voters may abandon the party following Mr Shorten's decision.

Joining a chorus of opposition from within the party, Ms Burke criticised the Labor leader for pre-empting this weekend's debate and said: "I'm not in a position to support this policy."

She said a genuine regional processing centre was the answer to stop people smugglers, not turning back boats, which would be dangerous for asylum seekers and the Australian navy.

Asked if Labor voters would switch to the Greens, Ms Burke said she did not see it as a Left-Right issue and that Liberal voters also cared about the treatment of asylum seekers. "But I do think there will be a lot of people this morning asking whether they will be able to vote for Labor."

The rise in Australia's refugee intake to 27,000 – it is currently 13,750 - is part of a suite of asylum seeker policies that will be debated at national conference.

Those policies are contained in the draft national platform and also include the abolition of temporary protection visas, and greater transparency and independent oversight of detention centres.

The 27,000 figure, which was recommended by the expert panel on asylum seekers led by former Defence chief Angus Houston, is likely to be adopted by the conference.

This and other measures are seen internally as both morally the correct thing to do and as something of a peace offering to the party's Left, much of which is opposed to boat turn-backs.

The adoption of boat turn-backs – long-flagged by Mr Shorten and his immigration spokesman Richard Marles – is far more contentious.

The numbers on the conference floor – there are 197 Right-aligned delegates, 196 Left-aligned delegates and 4 non-aligned delegates – mean the vote on turn-backs will be tight.

A loss for Mr Shorten would almost certainly be fatal for his leadership.

Mr Shorten flagged on Wednesday night that he would have more to say about the rise in the refugee intake.

"I do believe we can probably take more refugees," he said.

He told the ABC's 7.30 program that Labor had decided to adopt the turn-back policy because the party "wants to defeat the people smugglers and we want to prevent drownings at sea".

Greens immigration spokeswoman Senator Sarah Hanson-Young said on Thursday that Mr Shorten had "kow-towed" to Prime Minister's policy of turning back asylum seeker boats. Labor had become a "thin-veiled image of the Liberal party" particularly on refugees.

"There is no leadership being shown here. It's the coward's way to back fear over an anti-refugee campaign run by Tony Abbott. It's the coward's way to play politics with people's lives rather than stand up and call for a humanitarian response."

Senator Hanson-Young rejected the idea that turning back boats prevented people dying at sea in the long term.

"Pushing boats away doesn't save lives, it pushes people to die in someone else's waters or leaves them locked in a situation, trapped where they can't escape danger. Whether that's in Malaysia, Indonesia or many of their homelands."

Refugees continued to need Australia's protection, she said.

She said Mr Shorten's decision to change his stance on turning back boats was purely political and lacked a humanitarian response to refugees, such as the European Union's, whose naval ships were rescuing people at sea and bringing them ashore to process their claims.

"Where is the response on search and rescue? Where's the detailed policy on a regional framework?"

In March, Labor's leading member of the Left - Mr Shorten's deputy and the ALP foreign affairs spokeswoman Tanya Plibersek - said boat turn-backs had damaged Australia's relationship with Indonesia.

"We certainly have been opposed to turn-backs," Ms Plibersek told Sky News. "Tony Abbott can't get a phone call returned from the Indonesian president – it has affected our relationship with Indonesia in the past. It has not been good for it."

<http://www.smh.com.au/federal-politics/political-news/warning-voters-will-abandon-labor-over-boat-turnbacks-as-left-throw-refugee-sweetener-20150722-gijj11.html>

9. Shorten faces test over plan to adopt Coalition's asylum boat turnback policy

Factional battleground set as Labor leader says government 'is defeating people smugglers' and his party 'made mistakes' on the issue when last in power

The Guardian
Gabrielle Chan
Wednesday 22 July 2015 19.29 AEST

Bill Shorten is pushing to adopt the Abbott government's policy of turning back asylum seeker boats at the party's conference this weekend, in effect daring the left to take on his leadership.

"I think it's clear that the combination of regional resettlement, with offshore processing, and also the turnback policy, is defeating people smugglers," the Labor leader told ABC television.

"It's not easy, though, because it involves the admission, I think, that mistakes were made when Labor was last in government."

Turnbacks remain a red-line issue for many Labor delegates but the opposition immigration spokesman, Richard Marles, acknowledged Labor's previous policy in the Rudd-Gillard government had caused a "terrible loss of life".

"Despite best intentions, a terrible loss of life took place on Labor's watch," Marles told the Herald Sun. "We did not get it right then but we are very clear now about making sure we don't repeat those mistakes.

"Offshore processing and regional resettlement together with the Coalition's policy of turnbacks is what actually stopped the boats. I believe, provided it can be done safely, a future Labor government must have the option to undertake turnbacks."

The leadership's position – revealed on the eve of factional caucus meetings on Thursday – is likely to cause a bruising fight, both within the faction meetings and on the floor of the conference.

"I'm not the sort of person who gives up and I hope people will work and understand why we're saying what we're saying," Shorten said, adding that he believed Australia could "probably" increase its refugee quota.

"Australia should do its fair share and that's why we're prepared to consider things which previously we might not," he said.

The right has been moving assiduously over recent days to marshal trade union support to defeat a push by the left to prohibit boat turnbacks in the party's asylum platform. At this stage, turnbacks are not mentioned in the draft platform which forms the party's policy document.

"This journey is all about people smuggling: criminal syndicates, making lots of money, taking advantage of vulnerable people with the result that 1,200 asylum seekers died on our border in less than three years," Marles said.

"Were a future Labor government to allow this journey to start again in earnest, and put people smugglers back in business, the consequence would be a huge loss of life on our borders again. Given what we now know, we would be rightly condemned."

Greens senator Sarah Hanson Young tweeted: "When will Labor learn that capitulating to the Coalition on refugees has never made the issue go away." She said the Liberal party would "just find the next cruel thing".

Scott Morrison, the current social services minister and former immigration minister, tweeted that Labor was "all talk on turnbacks".

"The Coalition's record on border protection and turnbacks is proven. The people smugglers know it ... The Coalition's successful border protection policies ended Labor's deadly madness and restored integrity to our refugee programme."

Paul Power, spokesman for the Refugee Council of Australia, told ABC Mr Shorten was asking the party to abandon "its principles of fairness, compassion and respect for international law".

Sources on the Labor right are expressing cautious optimism that the numbers will be there to see off the left on turnbacks, but several party insiders said it was still too close to call as factional numbers were closer than at any time in the past 20 years.

Furthermore, unlike in past years, delegates are not sure the factional leaders will be able to bind their members to vote along factional lines, given calls for greater democratisation.

One of the key debates pushed by the left will be about removing a measure of factional power to allow ordinary party members to have a say in preselecting Senate candidates and delegates for federal conferences.

On Tuesday night, the right abandoned a controversial push to secure three votes from the Young Labor delegation. The right has now agreed that the left can take one of the three youth wing positions. After the resolution of that dispute the left takes 196 votes into the conference, with the right on 197.

There are four non-aligned delegates. The debate on changing party rules requires a statutory majority of 199 votes. The left push is for 50% grassroots ballots – mirroring the proportion now in place to select Labor's federal leader.

The right does not support democratisation at a threshold of 50%. Given the Labor leader Bill Shorten nominally supports party democratisation but in highly non-specific ways, Shorten's right faction may counter the left push with a lower threshold on conference eve.

Earlier on Wednesday, Labor's president Mark Butler acknowledged the previous Labor government's difficulties on asylum seeker policy, but said he did not want to pre-empt the debate on turnbacks.

"I think there have been concerns expressed going back to our time in government about ensuring safety at sea in all of these operations, including the possibility of turnbacks, safety at sea not only for asylum seekers but also importantly for Australian personnel. The impact of these sort of policies and operations on our relationship with Indonesia has been something we've talked about consistently for some years, so this is a serious debate."

Also up for debate is a motion on emission reduction targets, ahead of the United Nations climate talks in Paris later this year.

The Abbott government has delayed announcing its final decision on the post-2020 targets Australia it will take to Paris, though environment minister Greg Hunt has said it would be more ambitious than the current commitment, which is 5% on 2000 levels by 2020.

The Labor Environment Action Network (Lean) is taking a motion for Labor to adopt the targets set by the Climate Change Authority (CCA), which said Australia needed to cut carbon emissions by 30% by 2025 and sign up to further cuts of 40-60% by 2030 to catch up with other countries.

Lean is also pushing for more ambitious renewable targets, and on Wednesday Shorten announced the conference would debate a policy under which half of Australia's large-scale energy production would be from renewable sources by 2030.

While Shorten is sure to win support for the new 50% renewable targets motion, Labor insiders said the motion supporting CCA emissions targets was less likely to succeed, given the government is yet to reveal its target.

The China free trade agreement (Chafta), recently signed by trade minister Andrew Robb, is also bound to create heated debate. The Chafta requires that Australia will not “impose or maintain any limitations on the total number of visas to be granted” to China or “require labour market testing, economic testing or other procedures of similar effect as a condition for temporary entry”.

The labour provisions, which overturn current labour market testing for overseas workers, have been fiercely opposed by the union movement and Shorten has promised to “do what we can in parliament”.

The Chafta has been signed, but legislation is required to enable some elements of it. Other controversial elements such as the Investor State Dispute Settlement (ISDS) do not require legislation.

“In the parliament, Labor will fight to retain labour market testing, so employers need to show they cannot find suitable local workers before they turn to temporary migration for projects greater than \$150m,” Shorten said.

“And we will fight to maintain the integrity of Australia’s occupational skills and safety regulations. We will do all we can in the parliament before the enabling legislation is passed.”

Shorten will address the Labor conference on Friday morning and the conference runs for the weekend.

<http://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2015/jul/22/shorten-faces-test-amid-push-to-adopt-coalitions-asylum-boat-turnback-policy>

10. Labor frontbencher Stephen Conroy predicts 'very close' vote over Bill Shorten's support for boat turn-backs

ABC News Online

By political reporter Anna Henderson

First posted Thu 23 Jul 2015, 9:48am

Updated Thu 23 Jul 2015, 11:20am

Labor frontbencher Stephen Conroy has acknowledged Opposition Leader Bill Shorten will face a close contest at this weekend's national ALP conference when he asks for support to endorse a policy of turning back asylum seeker boats.

Despite previously criticising the Coalition's policy to turn back boats, Mr Shorten has now confirmed he is in favour of it.

"I think it's important to be honest with my party and the nation and, if I was to form a government, I would want the option of boat turn-backs where safe to do so on the table," Mr Shorten told Channel 7 this morning.

He will take the new proposal to the conference and ask for support from almost 400 voting delegates — a mix of MPs, grassroots members and union representatives.

"What I will do, if I get the privilege of forming a government, is I'll act in what I believe to be the best interests of Australia and that is to have policies which don't lead to criminals encouraging people to get on unsafe boats and drown at sea," he said.

The about-face has enraged some members of Labor's Left faction who feel ambushed by the decision.

Victorian MP Anna Burke said a lot of voters would be reconsidering their support for Labor and she would not vote in favour of the change.

"I'm not in a position to support that policy," she said.

"I don't think there's a need to be trumpeting turn-backs."

Fellow Left faction MP Andrew Giles also criticised the move and said he would be lobbying against it.

"I'm concerned about the breach, as I see it, of international law," he said.

Senator Conroy, from Labor's Right faction, supported the policy change, but conceded it would be a hard fought battle this weekend.

"It is very close and there's people of goodwill on both sides who are very passionate about this," he told Sky News.

"I believe in the end Bill's position will carry the conference floor."

Mr Shorten's announcement on turn-backs came just days after a suspected asylum boat was spotted off the coast of Dampier in Western Australia.

The boat, carrying what are believed to be Vietnamese asylum seekers, was spotted by crew members on an oil tanker at first light on Monday morning about 150 kilometres offshore.

Water police were called in to help locate it and the ABC understands an Australian Navy boat followed later.

Prime Minister Tony Abbott has refused to provide any details in response to the reports, saying it is an "iron law" of his Government not to comment on operational matters.

<http://www.abc.net.au/news/2015-07-23/labor-frontbencher-predicts-27very-close27-vote-over-support-/6642438>

11. Asylum seeker policy and boat turnbacks breaking Labor's heart

For Bill Shorten to get Operation Sovereign Silence up at the party's national conference, leading from the front is what's required

The Guardian
Katharine Murphy Deputy political editor
Thursday 23 July 2015 13.15 AEST

Let's be clear about a few things in Labor's looming debate about asylum boat turnbacks.

Bill Shorten and Richard Marles have not just emerged from deep contemplation to suddenly resolve and clarify over the past 24 hours that Labor needs policy flexibility on asylum boat turnbacks.

The play from the party leadership all along has been to emerge from this weekend's national conference with Labor's refugee policy platform conspicuously silent on the question of whether a future ALP government would send unauthorised boats back to Indonesia.

When it came to boat turnbacks, national conference 2015 was to be Operation Sovereign Silence.

The capacity of Shorten and Marles to secure a more upfront position – that the platform spell out explicitly that turnbacks are to be part of Labor's future policy mix – was rated early on as having zero prospect of success at the conference.

It was a zero prospect because the right faction of Shorten and Marles is not in a position to call the shots. Not this year. Right operatives have had to call in every favour owing to them to assert any semblance of order in the behind-the-scenes number crunching.

Right now, the rough back-of-the-envelope count has the Shorten/Marles Operation Sovereign Silence option only half a whisker ahead. Votes have been bleeding on both sides. Some right wingers will support the left position on turnbacks, because they regard that as the morally correct position. As we speak the shop assistants union in Victoria and the National Union of Workers are being caucused (that's polite lingo for strong-armed) into accepting the national right position.

Some political pragmatists on the left will also part ways with their comrades and vote in favour of Operation Sovereign Silence, because they fancy artful omission is the only way Labor wins the next federal election. Some on the left will vote in favour of turnbacks because it's not their main game – they have had concerns in other policy areas assuaged during this past week, so they can return the favour to the leadership.

So what does this all come down to?

Hardheads in Labor just can't fathom an ambitious approach where the party attempts to set a nuanced course on unauthorised boat arrivals as a pre-election policy because the domestic debate in this space is so profoundly unhinged.

The wisdom of the back room says the amoral banality of bipartisan "stop the boats" is the only viable political option for the ALP, otherwise it's death by Ray Hadley and Alan Jones. Forget people-trafficking, the asylum debate in the Australian political sphere is slogan-trafficking, devoid of reason, balance, context and substance.

Camp pragmatic in Labor, as a consequence of those realities, shrugs helplessly and says, "What can we do?" Then it invokes deaths at sea as a means of balancing the competing moralities in the debate – Labor can't leave sugar on the table and allow people to drown en route to Christmas Island.

But camp moral says, hang on a minute. How about sending people with a legal right to seek Australia's protection back to unsafe and uncertain conditions? Doesn't this breach the spirit if not the substance of the refugee convention? And how do we ever climb out of surround-sound stupid if we don't start making the case for proportionality in Labor's asylum policy?

This is a debate that breaks Labor's heart. It cleaves the party down the middle. Regardless of the outcome this weekend, we will see that broken heart amply on display.

It also needs to be noted that we've seen a first in contemporary Labor leadership.

We've seen the party's federal leader, Bill Shorten, unable and unwilling to take a public position on the national conference show-stopper – leading from careful machinations undertaken by lieutenants in the backroom rather than leading, resolutely, from upfront.

Plotting in shade until conference eve rather than leading resolutely, in plain sight, will more than likely win Shorten a key debate this weekend, smart, seasoned political operatives will doubtless conclude.

But for those of us outside that self-reinforcing, back-slapping bubble, leadership from a cupboard is not exactly a reassuring portent about Shorten's disposition.

If Shorten has aspired all his life to lead, then leading is what's required. There will be harder political fights than this one – fights that can't be delegated, fights that have to be won from out the front.

<http://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2015/jul/23/asylum-seeker-policy-and-boat-turnbacks-breaking-labors-heart>

12. Labor's Anthony Albanese has 'real concerns' about Bill Shorten's shift on asylum turn-backs

ABC News Online

By political reporters Eliza Borrello and Jane Norman

First posted Thu 23 Jul 2015, 6:50pm

Updated Thu 23 Jul 2015, 7:10pm

Labor frontbencher Anthony Albanese says he has "real concerns" about Bill Shorten's announcement yesterday that he supports the Coalition's policy of turning back asylum seeker boats.

Mr Albanese, who lost the Labor leadership ballot to Mr Shorten after the 2013 election, made the remarks in an address to Labor supporters at his pre-ALP national conference drinks in Melbourne. "I have real concerns about the way that yesterday was conducted in terms of the announcement on asylum seekers," he said. "I think that it is absolutely critical, critical that we always remember our need for compassion and to not appeal to our darker sides.

"Labor is at our best when we appeal to the best in society, when we represent a vision for the future - a vision of hope, for aspiration.... something that will mobilise people to go and work out there for the Labor cause.

"That is how we have been successful in the past. I firmly believe that is how we will be successful in the future."

Yesterday Mr Shorten revealed he wanted Labor to have turn-backs in its arsenal if it won government, conceding the Coalition's policy had worked.

The policy shift is set to be one of the flashpoints at the party's national conference which starts tomorrow.

Mr Shorten is not expected to put forward a new platform to explicitly endorse turn-backs at the conference, but rather to argue the current policies do not rule the practice out.

The matter is only likely to go to a vote if those opposed to the policy put forward a specific ban on turn-backs, which the group Labor For Refugees has flagged doing.

Mr Albanese is a member of Labor's left faction which reaffirmed its opposition to turn-backs after a lengthy meeting this afternoon. In their leadership contest, Mr Albanese won a ballot of Labor's rank-and-file members but Mr Shorten had the numbers in Caucus and was elected leader when the two votes were combined.

'I wish he'd done it two years ago'

On 7.30, Prime Minister Tony Abbott said he was prepared to congratulate Mr Shorten for changing his view on turn-backs.

"I'm prepared to say good on Bill. I just wish he'd done it two years ago," Mr Abbott said. "I just wish he'd done it when he was in government, because if he was in government, up to 1,000 people might not be dead.

"My problem is not this 11th-hour change of position, my problem is do they really believe it?"

"Because as we know to make these policies work, you can't just say you support them, you've got to actually believe it in your heart and soul and I'm not sure that too many people in Labor do."

<http://www.abc.net.au/news/2015-07-23/albanese-has-real-concern-about-shortens-turn-back-statement/6644164>

13. Anthony Albanese criticises Bill Shorten's handling of boat turn-backs policy

Sydney Morning Herald

July 23, 2015 - 8:31PM

James Massola, Tom Allard, Michael Gordon

Bill Shorten's handling of Labor's controversial decision to adopt Tony Abbott's policy to turn back asylum seeker boats has drawn fire from his 2013 leadership rival, Anthony Albanese.

In a short speech on the eve of the Labor Party conference, Mr Albanese said he had "real concerns about the way that yesterday was conducted in terms of the announcement on asylum seekers".

"I think that it is absolutely critical, critical that we always remember our need for compassion and to not appeal to the darker side," he told a Labor Party function in Melbourne.

The comments are a rebuke to Mr Shorten and came as the Opposition Leader prepares to challenge the Prime Minister over climate change policy at Labor's national conference on Friday.

Mr Shorten will place climate policy front and centre, days after unveiling a bold climate policy goal this week that will require half of Australia's large-scale energy production to be generated using renewable sources within 15 years.

But the Opposition Leader is facing a gruelling three day test of his leadership. Damaging debates over asylum seeker policy, whether or not to bind all MPs to support same-sex marriage and trade policy are among the issues that will test the opposition leader's authority.

Indonesia also expressed its surprise and disappointment on Thursday at Mr Shorten's changed position on boat turn-backs, saying the policy risked lives and shifted the burden of solving people smuggling back on Indonesia.

The Labor Left was mobilising on Thursday over the issue, preparing a formal motion to forbid the ALP from adopting a boat turn-back policy.

One Left MP told Fairfax Media that "we are determined to oppose turn-backs and we have a couple of days to socialise it and work out how it plays out".

But Right faction powerbrokers rallied to Mr Shorten on Thursday, after the Opposition Leader on Wednesday said he wanted the party to adopt the turn-back policy because it "wants to defeat the people smugglers and we want to prevent drownings at sea".

Labor's national platform does not mention the controversial boat turn-backs policy, which the Abbott government has successfully implemented, and the Right believes it could secure up to 215 of the 397 votes to block any Left move to oppose turn-backs.

As a compromise designed to appease the Left, the ALP is also expected to back a move that would double Australia's refugee intake to from 13,750 to 27,000 people over time, as part of a suite of new immigration policies that also includes the abolition of temporary protection visas, and greater transparency and independent oversight of detention centres.

At least one Left faction powerbroker predicted that Mr Shorten would carry the day on the issue.

However, Labor backbencher and former speaker Anna Burke warned voters may abandon the party following Mr Shorten's decision, criticising the Labor leader for pre-empting this weekend's debate and said: "I'm not in a position to support this policy."

She said a genuine regional processing centre was the answer to stop people smugglers, not turning back boats, which would be dangerous for asylum seekers and the Australian navy.

In Indonesia, Andi Rachmianto, the director of international security at Indonesia's department of foreign affairs, said boat turn-backs was against the principle of "burden sharing".

"This kind of policy, the turn-back policy, is unilateral in nature and is shifting the burden back to Indonesia," he said.

"When they are sending back the boats with tens or hundreds of migrants back to Indonesia, to our borders [and travelling as far as] 200 miles, it is risking their lives, especially after they have been already sailing for a few days or one week. This is a humanitarian concern that we would like to underline."

Greens immigration spokeswoman Senator Sarah Hanson-Young said on Thursday that Mr Shorten had "kowtowed" to the Prime Minister's policy of turning back asylum seeker boats. Labor had become a "thin-veiled image of the Liberal Party" particularly on refugees.

Prime Minister Tony Abbott welcomed Mr Shorten's shift on the issue but said that he should have made it years ago.

"I'm prepared to say: good on Bill. I just wish he'd done it two years ago. I just wish he'd done it when he was in government," he said, adding that if Labor had adopted the policy sooner, "up to 1,000 people might not be dead".

"Up to 50,000 people might not have come to Australia illegally by boat. We might not have had the \$11 billion budget blow-out that we did because Labor refused to do what was always the right thing here.

He also questioned whether it was a believable switch of policy, because "to make these policies work, you can't just say you support them; you've got to actually believe it in your heart and soul and I'm not sure that too many people in Labor do".

<http://www.smh.com.au/federal-politics/political-news/anthony-albanese-criticises-bill-shortens-handling-of-boat-turnbacks-policy-20150723-gij9xm.html>

14. Anthony Albanese surprised by Bill Shorten's boat turnbacks announcement

The Age
July 24, 2015 - 10:35AM
Sarah Whyte

Bill Shorten's Labor rival Anthony Albanese has admitted that he was not aware that his leader would announce the party's controversial policy of boat turn-backs ahead of the party's National Conference.

Speaking on the Today show on Friday morning, Mr Albanese was repeatedly questioned by host Lisa Wilkinson on whether Mr Shorten had kept the announcement a secret from members of the party.

"So you did know he was going to make that announcement?" Wilkinson asked.

"Look, the timing is something that I wasn't conscious of, ah, but the fact is that we've been discussing these issues for some time and the whole range of issues," Mr Albanese said.

"It is a difficult issue, it is a complex issue."

When asked whether he would support the new policy, Mr Albanese said there was only a draft proposal.

"On the basis of my position, which is you need to be tough on people smugglers, we need to make sure people don't risk their lives by getting on boats to come to Australia, but also that doesn't mean that we have to be weak on humanity," he said.

On the eve of the conference, Mr Albanese said he had "real concerns" about the way Mr Shorten made the announcement, saying the party needed to "remember our need for compassion and to not appeal to the darker side."

But Labor shadow treasurer Chris Bowen said he supported Mr Shorten's premature announcement on turn-backs, arguing that he would have been accused of not being open or honest if he'd left it to addressing it on the conference floor.

"I think Bill Shorten has shown considerable leadership in dealing with this very difficult issue," he told reporters in Melbourne on Friday morning.

"He will not put a situation to be continuing where Labor can't have the policy options available to it necessary to save lives and ensure a fairer, more orderly and safer refugee system," he said.

"I expect the conference will recognise the strength of Bill's arguments, yes."

In October last year, Mr Shorten assured the caucus that the party's policy on turn backs would not shift.

"I know there has been a lot of stories over the last few days. I want to make it crystal clear there has been no change to Labor's policy on Tony Abbott's secret turn-backs. I can't be clearer than that," he told said in late October.

<http://www.theage.com.au/federal-politics/political-news/anthony-albanese-surprised-by-bill-shortens-boat-turnbacks-announcement-20150724-gijg6e>

15. Anthony Albanese warns Labor against appealing to 'dark side' on turnbacks

Leadership rival says he has 'real concerns' about Bill Shorten's plan to adopt the Coalition's asylum policy as announcement threatens to divide party conference

The Guardian
Gabrielle Chan and Katharine Murphy

Thursday 23 July 2015 20.28 AEST

Senior frontbencher and leadership rival Anthony Albanese has criticised Bill Shorten's last minute conversion to boat turnbacks ahead of the Labor party conference, warning the party against an appeal to the "darker side".

Albanese said he had "real concerns about the way that [the day] was conducted in terms of the announcement on asylum seekers".

"I think that it is absolutely critical, critical that we always remember our need for compassion and to not appeal the darker side."

Albanese, who ran against Shorten for Labor's leadership ballot, made the remarks as party members had to digest their leader's surprise announcement, made by the opposition shadow immigration spokesman Richard Marles in a News Corp paper on Wednesday night.

Shorten's decision to argue publicly for turnbacks at the eleventh hour won a testy response in both the right and left caucus meetings on Thursday.

Delegates on both sides of the factional divide were taken aback by Shorten's conference eve challenge to back the leadership on an issue that has split the party.

While rightwing powerbroker Stephen Conroy earlier predicted Shorten appeared to have the conference numbers for turnbacks, the result still remains unclear on the eve of the conference, which begins on Friday.

Albanese's intervention gives a strong hint of his voting intention on the expected motion from the left that seeks to rule out turnbacks as an option in the party's national platform document.

Shorten and Marles' preference is that the platform remains silent on the issue of turnbacks, to allow the parliamentary party a measure of flexibility.

A number of MPs have come out on either side. Former speaker and Victorian MP Anna Burke and Tasmanian senator Lisa Singh have spoken out against turnbacks while WA MP Alannah MacTiernan said she would support turnbacks if it were in conjunction with the proposal to double the refugee intake to 27,000.

"The quid pro quo for this is going to be something that is immeasurably valuable," she said.

"There is a great upside to this. If we can extract from this a doubling of our intake then I am more than happy to stand behind that policy."

Prime minister Tony Abbott was unable to resist entering the debate and gave Shorten some credit for wanting to adopt his government's policy. "I'm prepared to say: good on Bill," Mr Abbott told ABC television on Thursday.

But the applause came with a swipe, as the prime minister told Labor that had the party implemented the policy in government hundreds of lives could have been saved.

"I just wish he'd done it when he was in government because ... up to 1,000 people might not be dead," he said.

Groups campaigning for better treatment of asylum seekers were less supportive. The Refugee Council of Australia accused Shorten of "pandering to the politics of fear".

Refugee lawyer David Manne lamented there were many cases of people being turned back who had been found to be genuine refugees.

<http://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2015/jul/23/anthony-albanese-warns-labor-against-appealing-to-dark-side-on-turnbacks>

16. Bill Shorten promises 'safe and humane' asylum seeker policy amid split over boat turn-backs

ABC News Online

By political reporter Anna Henderson

Posted Fri 24 Jul 2015, 8:49am

Opposition Leader Bill Shorten has promised party dissenters that Labor's asylum seeker policy will be "safe and humane", as he seeks to bring delegates into the fold on the highly sensitive issue ahead of this weekend's ALP national conference.

The now mandatory standing ovation and energetic applause accompanied Mr Shorten as he headed to the stage, throwing his hands in the air with two thumbs up in acknowledgment of the crowd.

Hundreds of Labor delegates, from grassroots members to MPs and union representatives were among those cheering him on.

The Labor leader is facing vocal internal dissent over his push for the party to support the option of turning back asylum seeker boats in government.

With the left faction poised to raise its opposition to boat turn-backs on the floor of the conference Mr Shorten did not dwell on this week's policy backflip.

But he did promise that the party's immigration spokesman Richard Marles would deliver "immigration policies that are safe and humane".

Mr Shorten's speech focused heavily on climate policy, and the reasons for putting in place an emissions trading scheme.

The government maintains whether the price of carbon is fixed or floating, it is still an added cost and therefore constitutes a tax.

"An ETS is not a tax," Mr Shorten said to enthusiastic cheers from the crowd.

"And we will not be intimidated by ridiculous, ignorant, fear-mongering scare campaigns that will come.

"Let me say this to our opponents, in words of one syllable: An ETS is not a tax.

"And if Mr Abbott wants to make the next election a contest about who has the best policy solution for climate change, I've got a three-word slogan for him: Bring. It. On."

The deputy Labor leader Tanya Plibersek has been quiet since Bill Shorten announced he wanted Labor to support the policy option of turning back asylum seeker boats.

The government has seized on her silence, with the Immigration Minister Peter Dutton claiming she has been in "witness protection" because she has previously vocally opposed the policy.

In her speech ahead of Mr Shorten's address Ms Plibersek was keen to highlight the strength of policy debate within the party.

"For us unity has never meant conformity," she told the delegates.

"Solidarity has never meant silence.

"We'll have debates at this conference because every one of us here is passionate about the future of our nation."

<http://www.abc.net.au/news/2015-07-24/bill-shorten-speaks-at-alp-national-conference/6645088>

17. Bill Shorten poised to win Labor conference support for boat turnbacks

The leader will propose a package of measures such as raising the annual refugee intake to 27,000 as he gains crucial backing from left-aligned unions

The Guardian
Katharine Murphy and Gabrielle Chan
Saturday 25 July 2015 00.01 AEST

Bill Shorten is set to prevail in the show-stopping debate of the 47th national conference after gaining critical support from left-aligned unions on boat turnbacks.

The shadow cabinet ahead of the national conference endorsed a \$450m package of measures including an increase in Australia's annual humanitarian intake to 27,000, an increase in funding for the UNHCR, a new children's advocate to safeguard the interests of children seeking asylum, and mandatory reporting of child abuse in all offshore and onshore immigration detention facilities.

The package endorsed by shadow cabinet also includes a commitment authorising a future Labor government to turn back boats "when it is safe to do so".

Shorten will announce all the refugee policy measures on Saturday morning in an effort to frame the afternoon debate on asylum policy.

In a statement, Shorten said he understood this was “an incredibly difficult issue for many people.”

“No one wants to see people drown at sea and I firmly believe this is the best way to avoid that happening again,” the Labor leader said.

“There must be absolutely no incentive for people smugglers to put vulnerable people on unsafe boats.”

Shorten’s decision to shift Labor’s policy to allow for boat turnbacks has met stiff resistance from the progressive left and from some trade union representatives aligned with the Labor right.

The left faction has been deliberating on options for Saturday’s debate.

Labor for Refugees had been expected to move a platform amendment in the debate which would have expressly prohibited boat turnbacks. As of late on Friday night, no such motion had been lodged.

The left faction was contemplating various fall-back options, including moving a resolution that would criticise the leadership’s positive position on boat turnbacks – but any such resolution would only be a gesture of protest.

The leadership wants to emerge from this conference with Labor’s policy platform silent on the question of boat turnbacks. A resolution from the conference floor would not make any concrete adjustment to the platform, as opposed to an amendment that would alter the platform.

Shorten has gained ground in the debate over the last 48 hours. Party insiders say delegates from the Construction, Forestry, Mining and Energy Union and United Voice – two left-aligned unions – have signalled in-principle willingness to vote with the right against any platform amendment that would prohibit a Labor government using boat turnbacks in the future.

Labor’s senate leader and senior left member Penny Wong declined to reveal her view on boat turnbacks on Friday, only saying she had expressed her view in shadow cabinet.

Another key left figure, Anthony Albanese, has criticised Shorten’s handling of the issue and has not said which way he will vote when any debate is under way.

Albanese faces competition from the Greens in his inner city seat of Grayndler in Sydney.

Shorten is likely to participate in the debate on Saturday.

At a conference event on Friday, Labor’s immigration spokesman Richard Marles foreshadowed the boost in the humanitarian intake. He said he would announce an “offering” on refugee places on Saturday that represents the “most generous that any potential Australian government” and the biggest offering of any country in the world.

Marles faced a largely hostile audience at the Labor fringe event on Friday held argue the case for Labor’s asylum seeker policies.

He said there were 10,000 people who required permanent resettlement and between 50-60m people displaced worldwide.

He said government could offer 30,000 places – as the Greens have promised - and it would still “represent a position saying no to almost everyone in the world seeking permanent resettlement”.

“Who you say no to and the circumstances in which you say no and how you do it are the questions that no one wants to ask or answer,” said Marles.

“It is a complex issue because that is the wicked problem that underpins it.”

Marles warned if Labor returned to its old policies that didn’t allow discretion for turnbacks: “You can forget about a future Labor government being remembered for anything else. You will be condemned by history.”

Labor senator Lisa Singh said the coalition had demonised asylum seekers.

“I believe we do need to find a better way other than accepting the Coalition’s idea of turning the boats back,” Singh said.

“Its easy for me to say, it’s another thing to make a different policy direction to make that happen and I acknowledge that.”

Marles said Labor’s “mission statement” on refugees should be making an “objectively generous offering” by global and Australian standards, which has “the greatest maximum effect in reducing the sum of global human misery”.

Marles faced a number of questions, including the suggestion that Australia take 250,000 people – (1% of Australia’s population) and he was also asked why Labor would not agree to bringing the 2000 in detention back to Australia.

"If we brought the 2000 asylum seekers from PNG/Nauru, there would be boats on the water the following day," Marles said.

Other issues up for debate on Saturday at the conference include the climate change debate, education and potentially same sex marriage.

<http://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2015/jul/25/bill-shorten-poised-to-win-labor-conference-support-for-boat-turnbacks>

18. Bill Shorten faces tough questions as asylum policies debated at ALP national conference

ABC News Online

By political reporter Louise Yaxley

First posted Fri 24 Jul 2015, 10:32pm

Updated Sat 25 Jul 2015, 8:04am

Federal Opposition Leader Bill Shorten will today face the most torrid day of the ALP national conference.

Mr Shorten has revealed details of his policy to support turning back asylum seeker boats along with a plan to double the refugee intake to 27,000 people a year and significantly improve conditions for detainees on Nauru and Manus Island.

But there is intense opposition to turn-backs from within sections of the Labor Party. Many say it is impossible for Australia to turn back boats and still comply with its international obligations.

The policy dispute is expected to lead to passionate debate over refugee issues at the conference this afternoon.

Mr Shorten revealed key details of his policy in a bid to shift the focus from the unpopular turn-backs plan to a promise to give \$450 million over three years to the United Nations refugee agency, the UNHCR.

Labor said that will put Australia in the top five of global contributors.

The Opposition Leader also promised Labor would reinstate references to the UN refugees convention in the Migration Act.

Doubling the refugee intake to 27,000 a year by 2025 would be one of the other key elements of his policy.

Mr Shorten also spelled out a plan for an independent advocate for children in detention and promised that they would have access to all unaccompanied children in detention.

He pledged legislation to impose mandatory reporting of child abuse in all detention centres, both onshore and offshore.

Mr Shorten said Labor would maintain its commitment to offshore processing, saying it dealt a huge blow to people smugglers' ability to sell the journey to Australia.

But he said they should not be run as punitive holding cells.

The Labor leader set out his vision for the centres to be humane and safe and with fast and efficient processing.

He would give the Commonwealth ombudsman the power to oversee the offshore detention network.

The group Labor For Refugees is determined to seek to soften Labor's policies, including trying to have boat turn-backs explicitly banned.

Mr Shorten emphasised that he understands it is a difficult issue for many people, but argued his policy was the best way to avoid people drowning at sea.

The policy has previously been agreed to by shadow cabinet, although the ABC understands not all members of his frontbench knew Mr Shorten was going to announce his support for turn-backs on Wednesday evening.

It appears likely that any motion to stymie Mr Shorten's plan by explicitly banning turn-backs would be defeated by conference delegates, but most expect the margin to be narrow.

Federal Labor MP Andrew Giles has put forward an amendment aimed at ensuring boat turn-backs cannot be part of ALP policy.

Mr Giles is from the Left faction, which opposes turn-backs in principle.

The motion is seconded by Murray Watt — who is on Labor's Queensland Senate ticket for the next election. Mr Watt is also from the Left faction.

It is set to provoke passionate debate but the amendment is not expected to succeed.

<http://www.abc.net.au/news/2015-07-25/shorten-faces-tough-questions-asylum-policies-alp-conference/6647602>

19. Labor conference: Party will be 'condemned by history' if boats restart: Richard Marles

Sydney Morning Herald
July 24, 2015 - 6:27PM
James Massola
with Ben Schneiders

Immigration spokesman Richard Marles has confronted party critics over boat turn-backs, warning a future Labor government would be "condemned by history" and "consumed" if asylum seeker boats restart between Indonesia and Australia.

The ALP endured another day of fractious debate over the contentious turn-backs issue, which saw Mr Marles booed during Opposition Leader Bill Shorten's major speech.

Labor Right power brokers were quietly confident they would be able to protect Mr Shorten from a defeat by the Left on the floor of the Labor Party conference over the issue, which would potentially imperil his leadership.

The Left, which largely opposes turning back asylum seeker boats, was due to decide on Saturday morning whether it would attempt to move a motion that would expressly forbid boat turn-backs in government.

In an at times heated debate with Tasmanian Labor senator Lisa Singh and Queensland Senate candidate Murray Watt - both of whom oppose boat turn-backs - Mr Marles warned Labor had to make difficult and hard decisions on the road back to government.

"Were we to go down a path of re-opening that journey [from Indonesia to Australia] again you can forget about a future Labor government being remembered for anything else," he said.

"We will be condemned by history. We would be consumed by that journey again, as we were when we were last in office."

At times, Mr Marles was booed and heckled by audience members during the debate and he faced a series of heated questions, including about the treatment of women and children on Nauru from the Asylum Seeker Resource Centre's Pamela Curr.

Another questioner confronted Mr Marles over the Manus Island and Nauru detention centres, demanding Labor shut the two facilities, which had been "disasters".

But Mr Marles replied that about 1200 people had lost their lives at sea under the former Labor government, and that regional resettlement to these two offshore centres had reduced the flow of asylum seekers by 90 per cent in the first two months of operation.

Mr Marles also promised, against the backdrop of the "largest humanitarian need since the Second World War", that over the next 24 hours Labor would announce "the most generous offering any potential Australian government has ever made to humanitarian affairs around the world".

That is expected to mean a doubling, by Labor, of Australia's refugee intake from 13,750 to 27,000 in government.

Earlier, Labor frontbencher Anthony Albanese said he wanted to see Labor policy that "ensures that we remain tough on people smugglers, but that we have humanitarian outcomes".

Mr Albanese - who on Thursday criticised Mr Shorten's handling of the decision to adopt tow backs in government - said he supported the ALP's existing platform, which does not mention the policy, and that he would "judge proposals based upon the principles that I have and have held on these issues".

And fellow Left faction member Penny Wong would only say that she had made her views on turn-backs clear in the shadow cabinet, that there were people of good conscience on both sides of this debate and that "no one wants to see more people die at sea".

But Mr Shorten and Mr Marles' position on tow-backs appeared to win some unexpected support with the leadership of the left-wing Construction, Forestry, Mining & Energy Union not expected to oppose the Right over the issue.

The CFMEU's support is regarded as crucial to Mr Shorten having enough numbers for his right wing faction to win the day, as was the expected support of the progressive right wing union, the National Union of Workers.

<http://www.smh.com.au/federal-politics/political-news/labor-conference-party-will-be-condemned-by-history-if-boats-restart-richard-marles-20150724-gijzmf.html>

20. First the booing, then a leader's triumph: ALP conference ritual observed

Sydney Morning Herald
July 24, 2015 - 8:23PM
Tony Wright

Who would have thought? A deal carrying Bill Shorten through his first national conference as leader, even if there was a scattering of ritual booing first?

Anyone who has ever attended an ALP conference in the past quarter century: that's who would have thought.

Backroom deals are the currency of such events. Oh, there's the occasional shrieking and shedding of tears first, usually from the Left, often enough about asylum seekers or gay marriage or, in the old days, uranium.

But the party ends up supporting the leader, because that's what a national conference is: a dress rehearsal for an election campaign. If booing is going to come from within, better to get it out of the system at a national conference than at a campaign launch.

Old stagers remember when it was an art form.

Out on the floor someone from the Left would be weeping about the Leader's wish to allow uranium mining or some such. Upstairs, out of sight, Richo and Robert Ray would be holding court like a pair of Dons in a suite at Hobart's Wrest Point Casino, because that's where the conference was held for years, everyone safely corralled in a single hotel.

Factional leaders and lieutenants filed in to take their instructions, implied threats hanging. Downstairs, Hawkie knew he needed merely to wait until the caterwauling died down and he'd get his way.

Wrest Point has been nothing but a memory since 2000 and Richo and Ray have departed the backrooms. But the deal for the leader remains, because it must.

The party even rallied around Mark Latham at the 2004 conference, thanks in large part to the rallying skills of his deputy, Simon Crean, the presence of the Great Gough, desperate wishful thinking and the tradition that the leader must be supported.

Latham stared down furious Labor for Refugees, knowing deal-makers had wangled support for what seemed at the time to be his tough stance on asylum seekers. By the time it was over, all sorts of people who should have known better imagined Latham could become prime minister.

The latest national conference, everyone says, is a test of Bill Shorten's leadership. Why, he'd bravely gone out on a limb days ago to reverse Labor policy on turning back asylum boats. It was a risk.

It wasn't; not really. A deal has apparently guaranteed the numbers – even if it is a deal that delivers the numbers of the CFMEU, arch enemy of Shorten's old union, the AWU. Unions have always been top deal-makers, as Shorten knows, and the CFMEU loves to be owed.

There would be a little booing, naturally, offering an authentic edge to the test-of-leadership thing, and within a day Shorten would prevail.

The ritual of the ALP national conference: observed yet again.

<http://www.smh.com.au/federal-politics/political-opinion/first-the-booing-then-a-leaders-triumph-alp-conference-ritual-observed-20150724-gijzku.html>

21. Accepting Turn Backs Is About Helping Labor Not Asylum Seekers, Says Refugee Body

New Matilda
23 Jul 2015
By Max Chalmers

Refugee groups slam Marles and Shorten with Labor's Left faction due to debate the policy today. Max Chalmers reports.

The push to have Labor adopt the Coalition's policy of turning asylum seeker boats back to sea would put the party in a more extreme policy position than some far-right parties in Europe and force persecuted people back into the hands of their persecutors, according to the head of the Refugee Council of Australia.

Paul Power, CEO of the organisation, told New Matilda this morning that the move by Bill Shorten and Shadow Minister for Immigration Richard Marles to have the party adopt the policy had nothing to do with humanitarian concerns, and would provoke serious questions about what the party stood for.

"I'm absolutely convinced it's got nothing to do with the protection of refugees and everything to do with Labor's view of its political position," Power said.

"Sadly for the Labor Party this direction is going to leave millions of Australians deeply, deeply cynical about the ALP and whether it stands for anything. This policy, that the Abbott government is promoting, is the most hard-line in the world of any nation Australia would like to compare itself to."

On Wednesday evening both Marles and Shorten took to the media to announce they had reversed their positions on turn backs, signalling their desire to mirror that of the Abbott government.

Appearing on radio, television, and in print, Marles and Shorten talked up the humanitarian aspect of the policy, and embraced the Coalition argument that it would help prevent deaths at sea.

"It's not an easy issue for Labor because on one hand we're absolutely committed to the humane treatment of refugees and on the other hand we also want to prevent people drowning at sea and we want to make sure that the people smugglers and the criminal syndicates can't get back into action by exploiting government policies," Shorten said on the ABC's 7:30 program last night.

But the debate within the party is far from over, with the Left faction due to caucus today, and the question of turn backs expected to be debated.

Labor for Refugees, a group agitating for more humane policy within the party, had been working to have the issue explicitly debated at the party's national conference, to be held in Melbourne this weekend, with the hope of adopting an explicitly anti turn back policy in the party's platform.

But that challenge now looks immense, with the first hurdle being today's Left caucus.

Robin Rothfield, a national co-convenor of Labor for Refugees, said there was still some hope Labor would not adopt the policy being advocated by Marles and Shorten.

"It's really difficult for me to predict. I've been in two meetings this week with two unions which are aligned to the right and they've both been very supportive of us," he said.

"I'm quite shattered by what Shorten and Marles have done. I can't believe that I belong to the same party as they belong to."

Asked if the Labor for Refugees campaign had failed, Rothfield was frank.

"It is a worry. It is a worry, what more can I say," he said. "But let's see what happens today and on Saturday."

Greens Immigration spokesperson Sarah Hanson-Young took to twitter to slam the change in direction from Shorten and Marles.

<https://newmatilda.com/2015/07/23/accepting-turn-backs-about-helping-labor-not-asylum-seekers-says-refugee-body>

22. Bill Shorten outlines 'new direction' for Labor's immigration policies

By political reporters Louise Yaxley and Jane Norman
First posted Fri 24 Jul 2015, 10:32pm
Updated Sat 25 Jul 2015, 9:35am

Federal Opposition Leader Bill Shorten has outlined a "new direction" for Labor's immigration policies on what is expected to be his most torrid day of the ALP national conference.

Addressing delegates this morning, Mr Shorten revealed details of his policy to support turning back asylum seeker boats, along with a plan to double the refugee intake to 27,000 people a year and significantly improve conditions for detainees on Nauru and Manus Island.

"I do believe in a new direction, for Labor's immigration policies," he told the audience.

"I want us to accept more refugees, and treat refugees more humanely.

"I also want to guarantee we keep closed the lethal journey between Java and Christmas Island, which has already claimed so many lives."

But there is intense opposition to turn-backs from within sections of the Labor Party. Many say it is impossible for Australia to turn back boats and still comply with its international obligations.

The policy dispute is expected to lead to passionate debate over refugee issues at the conference this afternoon.

Mr Shorten revealed the details of his policy in a bid to shift the focus from the unpopular turn-backs plan to a promise to give \$450 million over three years to the United Nations refugee agency, the UNHCR.

The Opposition Leader also promised Labor would reinstate references to the UN refugees convention in the Migration Act.

Doubling the refugee intake to 27,000 a year by 2025 would be one of the other key elements of his policy.

Mr Shorten also spelled out a plan for an independent advocate for children in detention and promised that they would have access to all unaccompanied children in detention.

He also pledged legislation to impose mandatory reporting of child abuse in all detention centres, both onshore and offshore.

Mr Shorten has maintained Labor's commitment to offshore processing, saying it dealt a huge blow to people smugglers' ability to sell the journey to Australia.

The Labor leader set out his vision for the centres to be humane and safe and with fast and efficient processing.

He would give the Commonwealth ombudsman the power to oversee the offshore detention network.

The group Labor For Refugees is determined to seek to soften Labor's policies, including trying to have boat turn-backs explicitly banned.

Mr Shorten acknowledged people had different perspectives and deeply held principles on the issue but said there were "important truths" Labor must face.

"There is a history — and a reality — we cannot ignore," he said.

"The challenge before us is real — and the questions we grapple with are as elemental as life and death".

The policy has previously been agreed to by shadow cabinet, although the ABC understands not all members of his frontbench knew Mr Shorten was going to announce his support for turn-backs on Wednesday evening.

It appears likely that any motion to stymie Mr Shorten's plan by explicitly banning turn-backs would be defeated by conference delegates, but most expect the margin to be narrow.

Left faction opposed to adopting boat turn-back policy

There is a push within Labor's Left faction to drop plans for an amendment saying Labor should not adopt boat turn-backs, as the faction opposes turn-backs in principle.

Federal Labor MP Andrew Giles has put forward an amendment aimed at ensuring boat turn-backs cannot be part of ALP policy.

The motion is seconded by Murray Watt - who is on Labor's Queensland Senate ticket for the next election. Mr Watt is also from the Left faction.

Labor's Left caucus will meet again at lunchtime to thrash out its position on the asylum seeker amendments.

Some are strongly in favour of persisting with the debate so they can make their case against turning back asylum seeker boats.

But others in the Left say the faction should not put up amendments that it knows it will lose.

There is also an argument that Labor's existing platform prevents turn-backs because it says Labor has to abide by its international obligations.

In particular it states "Australia will comply with the non-refoulement and all other protection obligations we have voluntarily assumed in signing the Refugee Convention and other relevant international instruments and actively engage in the work of the United Nations High Commission for Refugees and other relevant international and regional agencies".

Some will argue at the caucus meeting that it would be counter-productive to put the amendment which explicitly bans turn-backs and then have it defeated.

They say instead, the Left should be emphasising that part of the platform which stresses Australia's international obligations because they argue turn-backs are at odds with those obligations.

But that reading of Labor's platform is contentious, others argue that because turn-backs are not explicitly mentioned in the party's platform they are not covered by it.

<http://www.abc.net.au/news/2015-07-25/bill-shorten-outlines-new-direction-for-alp-immigration-policies/6647602>

23. Bill Shorten taunts Tony Abbott on climate but faces boats hurdle

Sydney Morning Herald
July 24, 2015 - 10:12PM
Mark Kenny
with James Massola

Bill Shorten has declared he can win an election fought on climate change whenever Tony Abbott calls one, but the embattled Opposition Leader must first clear a hurdle in his own party: a leadership-endangering move to rule out boat turn-backs under a future Labor government.

While the numbers at the ALP's triennial national conference in Melbourne looked set to swing further behind Mr Shorten on Friday, the Left faction has decided to hold off making a final decision about whether to push the boats issue to a vote.

A decision will be made on Saturday morning, just hours before that section of the platform is due to be debated.

With tempers running high, Labor's immigration spokesman, Richard Marles, received boos from delegates for his stance in favour of turn-backs but the Victorian hit back, warning Labor would lose if it persisted with a policy position based on emotion rather than results.

"Were we to go down a path of re-opening that journey [from Indonesia to Australia] again, you can forget about a future Labor government being remembered for anything else," Mr Marles said.

"We will be condemned by history. We would be consumed by that journey again, as we were when we were last in office."

Inside sources initially said the numbers among the 397 delegates were close, with many in the Left angry at what they saw as an ambush by Mr Shorten before the conference when he declared turn-backs should be open to a future Labor government.

However, as the time for the debate neared, key Left votes appeared to break away in a bid to sandbag Mr Shorten's position and ensure he is not defeated on the floor of the conference.

Senior Left faction frontbenchers Tanya Plibersek, Penny Wong, Brendan O'Connor, and Anthony Albanese were all expected to stand with their leader if their faction attempted to insert a prohibition on turn-backs in the party platform, which is currently silent on the question.

And a key union, the CFMEU, is also understood to have switched, with its delegates likely to line up with Mr Shorten in any vote.

The question of turn-backs is an incendiary one within Labor amid concerns about the humane treatment of asylum seekers and deep reservations about the Abbott government's hardline and ultra-secretive approach.

Day one of the conference also saw Labor ratchet up its objections to the yet-to-be-ratified China-Australia free trade agreement.

Trade spokeswoman Penny Wong said the text of the proposed FTA lacked promised guarantees over labour market testing in Australia before foreign workers can be brought in; contained inadequate controls over accreditation for trades such as foreign electricians, and included so-called ISDS provisions (investor-state-dispute-settlement) which will allow Chinese corporations to sue the Commonwealth if Australian policies in health and environmental protection, for example, limit their claimed right to commerce.

The opposition has indicated it will not attempt to stop the FTA coming into effect but Senator Wong flagged a Labor government would seek to renegotiate the above provisions and would use a scheduled two-year review of the FTA for that purpose.

That sparked fury in the Abbott government, with the Parliamentary Secretary for Foreign Affairs and Trade, Steve Ciobo, branding it a "retrograde step by Labor".

"It would take trade policy back 30 years," he said.

Earlier, Mr Shorten used his opening speech to rally the troops, declaring Labor can win if it remains united and daring the Prime Minister to an election over climate change.

That followed Mr Shorten's decision to commit Labor to achieving 50 per cent renewable energy production within 15 years, first reported by Fairfax Media.

"We will win this fight," Mr Shorten told delegates.

"Let me say this to our opponents, in words of one syllable: an ETS [emissions trading scheme] is not a tax, and if Mr Abbott wants to make the next election a contest about who has the best policy solution for climate change, I've got a three-word-slogan for him: Bring it on!"

<http://www.smh.com.au/federal-politics/political-news/labor-national-conference-bill-shorten-taunts-tony-abbott-on-climate-but-faces-boats-hurdle-20150724-gik2iv.html>

24. Richard Marles promises border protection 'transparency', UNHCR backing of asylum seeker approach

ABC News Online

By Louise Yaxley

Posted Sat 25 Jul 2015, 1:51pm

Labor's immigration spokesman Richard Marles has promised there would be more transparency about border protection issues under a Labor government.

The pledge comes after Labor today revealed more of its asylum seeker policy at the ALP national conference.

"The Government does do this under a shroud of secrecy, they shouldn't. One difference about us is we would be doing this transparently," Mr Marles said.

He said the Government's media strategy was to use the cover of operational matters, "matters which are clearly in the public interest are denied scrutiny from the public".

The Government argues the information has to be controlled to ensure people smugglers cannot use it to try to encourage more asylum seekers.

But Mr Marles said the Government had been revealing the information in regular weekly briefings.

"They were giving precisely that shipping news every Friday afternoon," he said.

"I mean, if there was really some kind of security dimension to this you wouldn't be putting that information into the public domain but they were doing it on a weekly basis."

He said there would be an advantage in publicising that boats have been turned around.

"We certainly don't understand the logic which says that you wouldn't want to be projecting a message to people smuggling networks around the world that in fact this journey is shut," Mr Marles said.

"And that ultimately is the most important point to make here: we are not going to reopen this journey."

He said Labor would turn boats back to transit countries like Indonesia.

But Mr Marles said boats would not be turned back to source countries without a screening process.

"We want to have the full suite of options that the current Government is using in terms of ensuring that we can keep this journey shut," he said.

He was critical of the screening process the Government has used and said Labor would ensure it had the backing of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) for its approach.

"We would want to make sure there is a robust screening process and in that sense we would want to talk to the UNHCR about making sure that our processes do pass muster in that regard," he said.

Annual refugee intake to 27,000

Labor has promised to double the refugee intake to 27,000 people per year and said a portion of those would be specifically from this region.

Mr Marles said a Labor government would work closely with the UNHCR to ensure that did not become a "pull factor" encouraging asylum seekers to make the journey to nations in the region in the hope of finding a refugee place in Australia.

"We would want to be working very closely with the UNHCR, very closely with the countries of the region and very closely with other regional resettlement countries to make sure that you are minimising the effect of that as much as possible," he said.

But he said Labor wanted to improve the lives of the 300,000 registered asylum seekers in South-East Asia.

He said Labor would work to convince governments in the region to agree to let asylum seekers have work rights.

Mr Marles said those countries would expect Australia to give something in return and that would include the extra funding it has promised for the UNHCR and the pledge to take more refugees from the region.

<http://www.abc.net.au/news/2015-07-25/marles-promises-border-protection-transparency-under-labor/6648150>

25. Labor delegates vote down ban on asylum seeker boat turn-backs

ABC News Online

First posted Sat 25 Jul 2015, 3:35pm

Updated Sat 25 Jul 2015, 4:14pm

Labor's national conference has voted down a motion to ban the policy of turning back asylum seeker boats from the party's platform.

Federal Labor MP Andrew Giles moved the amendment to "reject turning away boats of people seeking asylum".

After about an hour of debate, the motion was voted down by delegates without a count.

Ahead of the vote, Opposition immigration spokesman Richard Marles told conference delegates Labor could not return to policies of the past and must have access to a full suite of measures, which "does mean turn-backs".

He said the Labor leadership proposed a policy which would also allow for the removal of children from immigration detention "as soon as humanly possible".

"This is a hard decision but it is the right decision because we cannot escape the responsibility of tomorrow by avoiding the hard decisions today," he said.

Frontbencher Tony Burke, Labor's last immigration minister before leaving office in 2013, gave an emotional speech in support of boat turn-backs, reflecting on the 33 people who died on his watch. "I want us to help more people than we've ever helped before but I want everyone to get here safely," he said. "I have no doubt whatsoever if we give hope to the trade we will end up helping fewer people... and hundreds will start the journey but never complete it."

Protestors briefly interrupted the debate, taking to the stage holding a banner saying "no refugee tow-backs".

Once they left the stage, Mr Giles told delegates he was hopeful, but not confident, that his motion would succeed.

"I am unconvinced by their [boat turn-backs] effectiveness, I regard them as inherently unsafe, in my view they are clearly contrary to our international obligations," he said.

Increase to refugee intake

Mr Shorten this morning told delegates new details of his proposed asylum seeker policy, saying he believed in a "new direction". "I want us to accept more refugees, and treat refugees more humanely," he told the conference. "I also want to guarantee we keep closed the lethal journey between Java and Christmas Island, which has already claimed so many lives."

Mr Shorten also announced a plan to give \$450 million over three years to the United Nations refugee agency, the UNHCR.

The Opposition Leader said Labor would also reinstate references to the UN refugees convention in the Migration Act.

Doubling the refugee intake to 27,000 a year by 2025 would be another of the key elements of his policy, Mr Shorten said.

He outlined a plan for an independent advocate for children in detention centres and promised they would have access to all unaccompanied children in detention.

He also called for a legislation which imposes mandatory reporting of child abuse in all onshore and offshore detention centres.

Mr Shorten has, however, kept Labor's commitment to offshore processing, saying it had a huge effect on people smugglers' ability to bring people across Australian borders.

On the sidelines of the conference Mr Marles said a Labor government would only turn asylum seeker boats back to transit countries, including Indonesia, and would not send boats back to a country of persecution.

He said Labor would not pursue the Government's media strategy of not commenting on asylum seeker boats, saying it was a policy designed to avoid "scrutiny from the public".

"They were giving precisely that shipping news every Friday afternoon," he said.

"I mean, if there was really some kind of security dimension to this you wouldn't be putting that information into the public domain but they were doing it on a weekly basis."

<http://www.abc.net.au/news/2015-07-25/alp-conference-votes-down-ban-on-asylum-seeker-boat-turn-backs/6647944>

26. Shorten wins freedom to use boat turnbacks, but leadership split on issue

Labor right faction prevails against left motion to prohibit turnbacks, however three of the opposition leader's most senior colleagues vote in favour of ban

The Guardian
Gabrielle Chan
Saturday 25 July 2015 18.51 AEST

Bill Shorten has won the freedom to use boat turnbacks as part of Labor's asylum seeker policy but lost the support of three of his most senior colleagues, who voted with the left against turnbacks.

Deputy Tanya Plibersek, senate leader Penny Wong and one time leadership rival Anthony Albanese voted against the adoption of turnbacks, effectively breaking shadow cabinet solidarity.

Albanese actively voted against turnbacks on the floor of the conference while Plibersek and Wong used proxy votes to make their opposition known to the controversial policy.

Albanese reportedly gave an impassioned speech against turnbacks in left caucus earlier in the day, saying "unlike other caucus members I won't just sit there and do nothing".

"This [boat turnbacks] is a red line we cannot cross."

Leftwingers Andrew Giles and Senate candidate Murray Watt tried to cut off turnbacks with a motion ruling them out.

"Labor rejects turning away boats of people seeking asylum," the motion said. "We believe it undermines the cooperation required to reach sustainable regional processing arrangements."

Murray Watt also attempted to change the platform to close down detention centres if the centres had failed to "deliver humane and safe conditions".

Both motions were defeated.

Before Giles could speak to his motion, refugee protesters interrupted him by unfurling a banner against turnbacks.

Giles said Bill Shorten would be a great advocate in government but he disagreed with his leader on turnbacks.

"I do disagree when it comes to turnbacks," said Giles. "I regard them as inherently unsafe. I see them as an impediment to seeking a safe pathway."

Richard Marles told delegates that the movement of people on boats between Indonesia and Australia was not undertaken by “Oskar Schindlers”.

“We have to have the full suite of measures to keep this journey shut,” said Marles.

Linda Scott, former convenor of Labor for Refugees, said turning back boats was unjust.

“It is not fair. It is not right. It is not the Labor thing to do,” Scott said.

Tony Burke said that as Labor’s last immigration minister, he saw 33 deaths at sea in four months.

“We have to show compassion to people not only in our line of sight but by everyone affected by our policies,” said Burke. “I can tell you from my perspective which policies work and which policies don’t.”

He said if people smugglers can argue to desperate people that they can get them to Australia one day, the trade would continue.

“If we give hope to the trade we will end up helping fewer people and hundreds will start the journey and never complete it.”

NSW rightwinger Matt Thistlethwaite said he used to oppose turnbacks until the drownings that occurred in 2010. He said the new immigration policy would, if implemented, see Australia’s program become the second largest in terms of humanitarian numbers and the largest per capita in the world.

Michelle O’Neill, a Victorian left delegate, spoke passionately against.

“If every country in the world adopted a policy to say we were going to turn back boats at sea, where would we be as a world?” O’Neill said.

Bill Shorten said he was counselled not to talk about boat turnbacks before the Labor conference – a policy he dropped just a day before Labor delegate meetings began.

“I thought, is there an easy way, that I did not have to give this speech, but I would not be the leader I seek to be if I ignored my own personal conviction on this matter,” Shorten said.

Co-convenor of Labor for Refugees, Shane Prince, said Labor members who oppose Bill Shorten’s decision to use boat turnbacks could complain to the party’s national executive.

Prince argues that as the Labor platform already supports the United Nations refugee convention, they believe the Labor platform already prohibits turnbacks.

“If they start doing turnbacks, that is something we would consider,” Prince told Sky News.

The left motion backs the other measures proposed by Shorten and Marles such as an increased intake, independent childrens monitor, regional processing and speeding up processing asylum claims.

In the process of arguing for turnbacks, Shorten announced Labor’s new immigration policy:

- • Uses turnbacks “where it is safe to do so” but boats will not be turned back to source countries. Labor committed to providing full details of turnbacks.
- • For boats coming from source countries, Labor says it will have the UN high commissioner on refugees tick off all processing – whether it occurs on water or not. For example, in the recent case of a boat from Vietnam, there was no UN oversight of processing (required under the refugee convention) of the asylum seekers before they were returned to Vietnam.
- • Abolish temporary protection visas, first introduced by the Howard government. Labor removed them under the Rudd-Gillard government and the Abbott government brought them back, under a deal with Clive Palmer’s then-larger senate block in return for “safe haven visas” to work in regional areas.
- • Reinstate the United Nations refugee convention in the Migration Act, which the Abbott government removed and replaced with an interpretation of the convention.
- • Increase humanitarian places from 13,750 to 27,000 over the next decade.
- • Provides \$450 million for the United Nations high commissioner for refugees in south-east Asia and the Pacific.
- • Labor will implement independent oversight of Manus and Nauru. It is understood there is already an oversight body but its deliberations have not been made public under the current government.

- • An independent children’s monitor, outside the immigration department and the ministry, will have statutory powers to advocate and investigate on behalf of asylum seeker children in detention, community detention or on bridging visas. The monitor will be able to take legal action on behalf of children but the minister would remain guardian.

Also on Saturday, Labor committed to adopt post 2020 pollution reduction targets consistent with binding Australia do its “fair share” to limit global warming to two degrees. Under the amendment, Labor must base targets on the Climate Change Authority, which currently recommends a 30% cut on 2000 levels by 2025 and 40-60% by 2030.

<http://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2015/jul/25/bill-shorten-wins-freedom-to-use-boat-turnbacks-but-leadership-split-on-issue>

27. Bill Shorten says he will not shirk hard decisions on asylum

Labor asylum seeker policy would double humanitarian places, establish an independent child’s advocate and restore the refugee review tribunal

The Guardian
Gabrielle Chan
Saturday 25 July 2015 11.35 AEST

Bill Shorten declared he would not shirk hard decisions as he argued for Labor to use boat turnbacks in an asylum seeker policy which would double humanitarian places, establish an independent child’s advocate and restore the refugee review tribunal.

The party remained locked in discussion as to the final form of a “protest” motion from the left faction, though the motion is sure to be defeated on the floor of the conference.

The left caucus struggled with a range of motions on asylum seekers, and turnbacks specifically, as it became clear sections of the left, including the CFMEU, had delivered the crucial votes to back Shorten’s support for turnbacks.

The platform does not explicitly address the issue of turnbacks. Labor For Refugees has argued because turnbacks contravene the refugee convention (of which Australia is a signatory) and because the Labor platform states support for that convention – then the platform rules out turnbacks.

The right considers the platform is silent on turnbacks and wants to keep it silent.

At issue is whether someone in the left will move a motion expressly ruling out turnbacks in the Labor platform, even though it is likely to be defeated.

Party sources said the left meeting, which took place at 8am on Saturday, could still not decide on the final form and substance of a motion against the practice of turning back asylum seeker boats on Australian waters. The decision was put off until lunch time, just an hour before the debate was due to begin.

Sources say some left members were in tears at Labor’s position.

Shortly after the caucus, Shorten addressed the floor to outline his immigration policies – including turnbacks, which was leaked to a newspaper the night before Labor members headed to Melbourne for the three day policy conference.

“I also want to guarantee we keep closed the lethal journey between Java and Christmas Island, which has already claimed so many lives,” said Shorten.

“We can ensure Australia provides safe haven to a greater share of refugees ... and that displaced people arrive here safely. This is why a Labor government must have the option of turning boats around, provided it is safe.”

The main elements of Labor’s new immigration policy are:

- • Using turnbacks “where it is safe to do so”
- • Abolish Temporary Protection Visas
- • Reinstate the United Nations Refugee Convention in the Migration Act
- • \$450 million for the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees in South East Asia and the Pacific

Shorten promised to “take a leadership role” within the region, particularly Indonesia, which has expressed opposition to turnbacks.

Labor's former immigration minister Tony Burke argued for the need for turnbacks as part of Labor's policy, describing his discovery of the death of a 10 week old baby Abdul Jafari – one of 33 deaths at sea during Burke's time in the job.

"I was handed his name on a post-it note and kept it on my desk for the rest of my time as minister," said Burke. "I kept it there for one simple reason. His story had to remain in my line of sight."

Burke said he rejected suggestions Labor's return to the turnback policy was a triumph of "pragmatism over principle". He accused the Coalition and the Greens of causing more deaths at sea by combining to defeat the Malaysian regional processing policy (subsequently knocked out by the high court).

"The turnback policy has not been the whole story or even the majority of the story in saving lives at sea," said Burke.

"It was Labor's policy at the elections in 2001, 2004 and 2007. At the next two elections we argued it could no longer be practically implemented as that was the best available advice at the time. Clearly, that is no longer the case."

The conference has spent the morning debating education policy and will move onto climate change and asylum seekers this afternoon.

<http://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2015/jul/25/boat-turnbacks-bill-shorten-says-he-will-not-shirk-hard-decisions-on-asylum>

28. Protesters dragged out of Labor national conference after disrupting immigration debate

Sydney Morning Herald
July 25, 2015 - 5:29PM
Mark Kenny

Labor's attempt to settle a new asylum seeker policy which would allow for boats to be turned around at high seas has been interrupted by a noisy protest within moments of the debate beginning.

Left faction MP Andrew Giles had just started talking in favour of a prohibition on turn-backs at the party's national conference when protesters mounted the stage at the Melbourne Convention Centre brandishing a large banner calling for a ban on tow-backs.

Several minutes were lost as security and party officials wrestled the protesters off the stage, prompting the newly elected ALP National President Mark Butler to call for better behaviour.

The protesters were then dragged out of the venue amid overwhelming applause from the floor of conference.

Mr Butler admonished the protesters, telling them the ALP is the only party to allow observers into its policy deliberation process, but that this came with a mutual obligation on those observers to show some respect.

Mr Giles, although agreeing with the sentiments of the asylum seekers advocates, also responded with some annoyance, telling the membership, he was proud to be a member of Labor leader Bill Shorten's team.

His speech was followed by the opposition's immigration spokesman, Richard Marles, who told the conference that adopting turn-backs was vital to the fight against people smuggling, and that it in no way made Labor the same as the Abbott government.

"By and large these people smugglers are now out of business," he said. "Some driving taxis in Jakarta. And so we must not be a party to opening this journey again and putting those people smugglers back into business with the inevitable consequence we will see a huge loss of life."

He said the new policy, which would double the refugee intake, was the best most humanitarian approach, and that any policy that brooked the revival of the people smuggling trade could not be allowed.

A spokeswoman for the group of protesters, David Power, said the policy would breach Australia's international legal obligations. "The Australia Labor Party needs to exercise political backbone and resurface a morality that's guided by humanitarian outcomes which looks after refugees, not punishes them," he said.

"Delegates cannot compromise on this. As refugee supporters we will continue to put pressure on the ALP in every way we can until their refugee policy reflects this. Otherwise just as they turned their backs on refugees, we will be turning our backs on them. "

<http://www.smh.com.au/federal-politics/political-news/protesters-dragged-out-of-labor-national-conference-after-disrupting-immigration-debate-20150725-gikfrn.html>

29. Tanya Plibersek in 'witness protection' over boats at Labor's national conference

Sydney Morning Herald
July 25, 2015 - 6:50PM
James Massola

Labor deputy leader Tanya Plibersek has drawn fire from her own side for being in "witness protection" over the ALP's decision to adopt the Coalition's policy of turning back asylum seeker boats.

And fellow frontbencher Anthony Albanese, who has led the Left in fighting the ALP's adoption of the boat turn backs policy, declared in a fiery meeting of delegates that "doing nothing" on turn backs was not an option.

Ms Plibersek and Senator Wong – who are both members of the leadership group – voted by proxy for the Left motion to avoid publicly opposing leader Bill Shorten.

Mr Albanese, who publicly backed a motion to explicitly forbid Labor from performing boat turn-backs in government, told the Left delegates meeting that "unlike other caucus members I won't just sit there and do nothing".

"This [boat turn-backs] is a red line we cannot cross," he said, adding that he would vote for the Left's motion.

Those comments were understood by multiple sources in the room as criticism of colleagues including Ms Plibersek and Senator Wong.

However, Mr Albanese later told Fairfax Media that he had not been criticising his colleagues and that he had in fact praised others in the meeting had a different view to him.

Queensland MP Terri Butler stood in for Ms Plibersek and ACT Senator Katy Gallagher stood in for Senator Wong.

Behind the scenes, Ms Plibersek has been under intense pressure from her political allies in the Left to publicly oppose the adoption of boat turn-backs.

But Labor's foreign affairs spokeswoman, who is seen by some in the party as a future leader and is a rival to Mr Albanese in the Left, has had to balance that pressure with the need to support Mr Shorten.

One Left delegate said Ms Plibersek had "barely spoken" on the issue during meetings and appeared to be in "witness protection", to the disappointment of many political allies.

Another Left delegate said Ms Plibersek had "put her duties as deputy leader of the Labor Party first" and that she was "much more hardline than Albo [Mr Albanese] on asylum seekers", though that delegate said that at least some in the Left understood the bind the deputy leader was in.

A third delegate said Ms Plibersek's absence from public debate over the issue showed she was "not used to serious scrutiny".

But an ally of Ms Plibersek's said she had focused her energy, during negotiations over the policy, on doubling the refugee intake and securing additional funding for the UNHCR – both outcomes that were secured.

"She has been genuinely conflicted on turn-backs, as deputy the need for solidarity has been at the top of her mind. That's why she hasn't bought in to public debate at all, it wouldn't have helped the leader," the ally said.

The Left-aligned Construction, Forestry, Mining and Energy union also backed Mr Shorten to defeat the motion to forbid turn-backs, and sections of the United Voice union also backed the Labor leader.

<http://www.smh.com.au/federal-politics/political-news/tanya-plibersek-in-witness-protection-over-boats-at-labors-national-conference-20150725-gikemc.html>

30. Shorten prevails on boat turnbacks but faces gay marriage fight

Sydney Morning Herald
July 25, 2015 - 9:52PM
Adam Gartrell

Bill Shorten has prevailed in his fight on asylum seeker boat turnbacks but could yet lose a vote on same-sex marriage.

At the ALP national conference on Saturday, the Opposition Leader fended off an attempt by the Left faction to amend the party's platform to prohibit a future Labor government turning boats back to Indonesia.

The Left sought to insert a line into the platform reading: "Labor rejects turning away boats of people seeking asylum. We believe it undermines the co-operation required to reach sustainable regional processing arrangements".

The amendment moved by Victorian backbencher Andrew Giles was declared lost after a show of hands.

The vote came after a heated and sometimes emotional debate that was interrupted by protesters who climbed onstage and unfurled a banner reading "No refugee tow backs". Mr Shorten told delegates he could not take a policy to the next election that could contribute to drownings at sea.

Mr Shorten's deputy, Tanya Plibersek, had a proxy vote in favour of the Left's motion but did not appear on the floor in person. Labor Senate Leader Penny Wong did the same. Mr Shorten's former leadership rival, Anthony Albanese, voted for the motion in person.

Had the amendment succeeded it would have seriously damaged Mr Shorten's authority and leadership.

But his relief may be short-lived. Sources on both the Left and Right say a vote on same-sex marriage is likely to be much closer and neither side is taking a win for granted.

Ms Plibersek has led the push for a binding vote on same-sex marriage, meaning Labor MPs and senators would be compelled to vote in favour of it in the Parliament or risk expulsion. Currently, Labor MPs are allowed to vote according to their conscience on the issue.

Mr Shorten is urging his colleagues not to support a binding vote.

"I believe a binding vote for Labor in favour of marriage equality risks the Liberals re-binding against marriage equality. It lets Tony Abbott off the hook," he told Fairfax Media on Saturday.

"But I understand that not every Labor MP or party member feels the same way. Some, particularly people of faith, take a different view. I respect this. It's why I support a free vote on marriage equality.

"I know we can achieve marriage equality by the power of our arguments."

Mr Shorten wants to keep the pressure on Prime Minister Tony Abbott to allow his team a free vote.

Ms Plibersek has been largely silent on the binding vote issue since first flagging it in April. But sources say she will advocate for the amendment on the conference floor on Sunday.

Fairfax Media understands the amendment is likely to keep the conscience vote status quo in place for the current Parliament and only impose a binding vote after the next federal election – if the reform has not yet passed.

"We don't want to give Abbott any excuse to squib it," a Left source said.

It's understood Labor Senate Leader Penny Wong will also back a binding vote. But Mr Albanese will vote against the amendment.

Earlier on Saturday, Mr Shorten unveiled the details of his broader immigration policy, full of sweeteners for those unhappy with his stance on turnbacks.

Mr Shorten pledged to double Australia's annual humanitarian refugee intake to 27,000 by 2025, abolish Temporary Protection Visas and reinstate the United Nations Refugee Convention in the Migration Act.

He also revealed details of an "historic" \$450 million contribution to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, to boost its capacity in south-east Asia and the Pacific. It would be the biggest ever Australian contribution to the UNHCR.

Mr Shorten also promised more independent oversight of Australian-funded immigration facilities in Papua New Guinea and Nauru, to restore access to the Refugee Review Tribunal and appoint an Independent Children's Advocate.

It's understood Labor will not adopt the government's secretive approach to asylum boat arrivals and will instead make a public announcement whenever boats arrive or are turned around.

Labor also won't return boats to some "source" countries like Sri Lanka and Burma because that would breach Australia's international non-refoulement obligations. But Labor sources are adamant no one who comes by boat will ever be resettled in Australia under any circumstances.

<http://www.smh.com.au/federal-politics/political-news/alp-national-conference-shorten-prevails-on-boat-turnbacks-but-faces-gay-marriage-fight-20150725-gjkcy9.html>