



We are also Australian

An Open Letter by Shukria, Zahraa, Atong, Toruna, Yasmin, Mou Giir on behalf of the Western Young People's Independent Network Youth Committee.

We are the people you do not hear about in the news; telling people what we do will not sell the newspaper or help politicians win an election.

We are a group of young people who volunteer in the community. We come from Ethiopia, Burma, Sudan, Eritrea, Vietnam, Italy, Iraq and Mauritius. We are also Australian.

Even though we are from different backgrounds, we have found that we have many things in common. As volunteers, we work together to promote understanding of different cultural groups and to support young people. We love getting together because we learn from and about each other.

Some of us came to Australia because we chose to live or study here. Some of us are refugees who came to Australia because war forced us to leave our countries. If we told you what we have been through you would cry.

It is true that some of us from African countries had very little formal education before coming here, and spent many years in camps. It is also true that we work extremely hard to learn English and to study so that we are able to find work here. The African young people in our group are studying biomedical science, community development, nutrition, management, nursing and VCE. When we gather together, we do so because we are used to living in a community and being social.

Sometimes we arrive here without family. We have responsibility to support the people we love who are still stuck in danger overseas and often we have many family responsibilities here. It is not easy.

Those of us who are refugees know how lucky we are to be here, and how hard it is to get here. We sold everything we owned, even food rations that we received in the camp, so that we could afford the medical test that we needed to pass to be accepted into Australia. We went through the immigration process and were accepted as refugees. For some people it takes many years and for others much less time. We find this confusing.

We worry about our loved ones who are stuck in danger overseas. We are trying to bring family here, so that they can be safe. We are sad that some of us may not be able to have parents or extended family brought to Australia to be with us, if we happen to be from Africa. We are sad that the government thinks that saying this will get them support to win the election.

We ask this question to the Immigration Minister – How would you feel if you were in our place, experiencing all the things that we go through? We only ask to be treated like you would like to be treated. It should be up to the United Nations alone to say who needs Australia's help the most.



We refuse to be separated by the government's words. We work together to help each other and ourselves for the good of Australia. Every day.

For more information you can contact WYPIN Youth Committee's Secretary Toruna Luxmi Ujoodah by contacting WYPIN on 9680 8265 or wypin@mcm.org.au.