# Refugees, Asylum Seekers and Migrants: What’s the Difference?

**REFUGEE**

## A person who is unable or unwilling to return to their country of origin because of a well-founded fear of persecution on racial, religious, ethnic or political grounds.

Australia uses this definition of ‘refugee’ to determine the legitimacy of claims for refugee status in Australia. If a person is found to be a refugee, Australia has an obligation to offer support and ensure the person is not sent back to the country of origin against his/her will.

ASYLUM SEEKER

A person who has applied for protection and is awaiting a determination on his/her status as a refugee.

Whereas refugees are people who have already been determined as meeting the criteria for refugee status, asylum seekers are people whose status is in the process of being determined.

MIGRANT

Migrants choose to leave their country to seek a better life. They choose where they migrate to and they can usually return whenever they like. They have time to prepare for their trip and their new life.

By contrast, refugees are forced to leave their country, often without warning and preparation, and cannot return unless the situation that forced them to leave improves. The concerns of refugees are human rights and

safety, not economic advantage.

*Many Waves of Refugees*