The Combined Refugee Action Group calls on the members of the Australian Senate to oppose Temporary Protection Visas (TPVs) for refugees for the following reasons:

1. TPVs do not allow for family reunification

- The UN Refugee Convention clearly states, under the principle of the Unity of the Family, that rights extended to those who are granted refugee status need to be extended to members of the family.

> "The Conference, considering that the unity of the family, the natural and fundamental group unit of society, is an essential right of the refugee, and that such unity is constantly threatened, and noting with satisfaction that, according to the official commentary of the ad hoc Committee on Statelessness and Related Problems (E/1618, p. 40),the rights granted to a refugee are extended to members of his family, recommends governments to take the necessary measures for the protection of the refugee's family especially with a view to:
>
> (1) Ensuring that the unity of the refugee's family is maintained particularly in cases where the head of the family has fulfilled the necessary conditions for admission to a particular country,
>
> (2) The protection of refugees who are minors, in particular unaccompanied children and girls, with special reference to guardianship and adoption."

- When families are not reunited under Protection Visas, women and children are often left unprotected in situations of ongoing persecution and torture.

- When TPVs were implemented under the Howard Government, women and children began to take the dangerous boat journey to reunite their families. The SIEV X is one well-documented case of drownings of women and children who were attempting to join their husbands and fathers. If the Abbott Government really believed that its harsh refugee policies were based on the need to save lives at sea, it would never introduce TPVs.

- As TPVs do not allow refugees to leave Australia and return, the option of meeting extended family (who are not the victims of persecution) in a safe neutral country for holidays, is ruled out. In many cases, TPV holders will never be able to see their extended family again.

2. TPVs suspend people in statelessness and constant fear of being returned to persecution

- TPVs allow short term protection only, and are continually reviewed. There is no certainty about ongoing protection.

- TPVs deny the opportunity for asylum seekers to ever apply for permanent residency and citizenship

- While Prime Minister, Tony Abbott, may believe that Sri Lanka is a peaceful country as the civil war has ended, the UN advises that torture, rape, beatings and 'disappearances' are still a reality for the Tamil people. People from countries ruled by Sharia law, or from areas controlled by the Taliban, will never be able to safely

return after seeking asylum here, as they will be considered to have committed treason against state and God by speaking out against their homeland officials.

- People on TPVs can never make long term plans and move on into a secure and stable life.

3. TPVs enforce entrenched poverty

- While TPVs may allow work rights, employers looking for permanent employees will be reluctant to hire people who do not have ongoing residency.

- Without permanent residency, refugees will not be able to access training without enormous financial cost. Given that almost every employment role requires a certificate of qualification, it will be almost impossible for them to find employment.

- Refugees will be forced to accept any employment they can find, regardless of compliance with award wages, taxation rules and occupational health and safety measures. As well as placing refugees at risk of exploitation and unsafe working conditions, it will also undermine the labour market for Australian citizens.

4. TPVs are not directly related to deterring people from using people-smuggling boats to seek asylum in Australia

- TPVs will only apply to those asylum seekers already on the Australian mainland. Under current refugee policy, no-one who subsequently arrives by boat will enter Australia. Therefore, TPVs have no role in deterring people from making the boat journey; they only seek to punish those who made the journey safely under a previous set of immigration rules.

- In the three years following the introduction of TPVs in 1999, more than 12,000 people arrived by boat seeking protection. This was a ten-fold increase to the less than 1200 people who arrived by boat seeking protection from 1996-98.

- As previously mentioned, the lack of access to family reunion for TPV holders also acted as an incentive for increased numbers of women and children to undertake dangerous boat journeys as the only way to reunite their families.

Members of the Combined Refugee Action Group have supported people living on Temporary Protection Visas during the Howard Government, and have seen the torment and misery TPVs cause. We were devastated by the tragic loss of our friend, Leo Seemanpillai, who took his own life earlier this year as an end to the constant terror of the possibility of being returned to Sri Lanka. We are deeply concerned that other lives will follow a similar path as a result of the psychological impact of TPVs.