

OBJECTION TO “BOAT PEOPLE”	REPLY TO THE OBJECTION	UNDERLYING FEARS OF AUSTRALIANS
1 “Boat people coming to Australia are doing so illegally.”	It is not illegal under Australian or international law to seek asylum.	<i>We are afraid that those coming to Australia are so desperate that they do not respect the law.</i>
2 “Boat people coming to Australia are jumping a queue.”	In South-East Asia, there is no queue. There are refugee camps, but no queues. If there are Australian officials in these camps, they are not inviting people to join a queue.	<i>We are afraid that those seeking entry lack concern for others in society and are concerned only for themselves.</i>
3 “80% of boat-people arrive without documents.”	Official sources say 80% of people arrive without a <i>passport</i> . The majority have identity documents. Those without <i>passports</i> may not have had one in the first place or they may have given them to people smugglers. In any case, they cannot be assessed as refugees without some papers, so the system cannot be rorted or abused in this way.	<i>These new arrivals may have sinister motives and hostile intentions in coming to Australia.</i>
4 “Men in these cultures leave their women and children behind. What a way to treat women.”	It is precisely their care and concern for families that leads men and their families together to send the head of the family on ahead to create a safe place from which they might then send for their family.	<i>These new arrivals represent the worst of their home cultures, and we fear they will neither fit into Australian culture, nor display the good aspects of their own culture.</i>
5 “Many of the boat-people are economic refugees. If they can afford to pay a people-smuggler up to \$10,000, they must be rich.”	\$10,000 may represent the family’s entire life-savings scraped together by selling house and possessions. Not exactly rich by Australian standards! Hazari from Afghanistan, Tamils from Sri Lanka and dissidents from Iran tell horrific stories of violence against them, and this is their prime reason for fleeing their country.	<i>We are afraid of being less well off than we are.</i>
6 “We should look after Australia and Australians first. Why let in crowds of people who will be a drain on our taxpayer-provided services?”	Firstly, 4,000 boat-people out of 13 million arrivals annually is hardly a crowd. Secondly, every study shows that immigrants to Australia, after a period of settlement, are net contributors to our wealth, not a drain on it.	<i>We are afraid that Australia will not be able to support too large a population.</i>