

UQ law student research exposes boat people myths

August 16 2010

A research project undertaken by a group of University of Queensland undergraduate students has exposed the widely believed election myth that boat people are “flooding our borders”.

The [Asylum](#) & Refugee Law Project, supervised by School of Law senior lecturer Dr Peter Billings, found that according to 2008-2009 government statistics there were more than 40 times more people residing in Australia unlawfully by overstaying their [visa](#) or breaching visa conditions than there were arriving by boat.

Dr Billings said the evidence yielded by the research project was being posted on a blog site each day this week in the lead up to the election to contribute to the public debate on the issue.

“The students are highlighting Frequently Quoted Inaccuracies in the federal election campaign and today's blog exposes one of the many myths about boat people seeking refugee protection in Australia,” he said.

“According Department of Immigration and Citizenship (DIAC) statistics, in 2008-2009 an estimated 48,700 people were residing in Australia unlawfully and had either overstayed their visa or breached their visa conditions.

"By contrast, during the same period, only 1033 asylum seekers arrived by boat.

“While 4916 people seeking asylum in Australia have arrived by boat since 1 July 2009, a significant increase from the previous year, it is still minor when compared to the number of people estimated to be residing in Australia unlawfully.”

Dr Billings said the group of students had undertaken the project independently after completing his Immigration and Refugee [Law](#) Course (LAWS5202) last semester.

“It's a credit to the students that they see the legal issues and discourse about asylum seekers and refugees as being extremely important and have undertaken this project in their own time without academic credit.”

Provided by University of Queensland

Citation: UQ law student research exposes boat people myths (2010, August 16) retrieved 4 May 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2010-08-uq-law-student-exposes-boat.html>

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