



**Letter to the Sydney Morning Herald  
Monday 5 July 2010**

Dear Editor,

The Prime Minister has invited public debate on refugee and asylum seeker policy but has given only one day for it to occur. That doesn't sound like a debate to me. She has also invited the public not to worry about political correctness and let their prejudices have full flow. The last time we heard that from a Prime Minister was when John Howard invited much the same. The Prime Minister also says that she understands and appreciates that people are "anxious" when they "see the boats arriving". What we need from the Prime Minister is leadership to help people understand that their anxieties are ill-founded, not a Prime Minister who encourages the anxieties. I wait with interest to hear about her new policy, but it is hard to be optimistic about Australia continuing to observe its international obligations towards asylum seekers.

Rev Harry J Herbert  
Executive Director, UnitingCare NSW.ACT