

MANNING CLARK HOUSE

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MEDIA RELEASE

Forum to query whether refugees get fair go

An exceptional array of speakers will gather in Canberra in late March to explore the policies and practices underlying Australian governments' approaches to immigration, detention, refugees and asylum seekers.

Politicians, academics, writers and filmmakers, journalists, refugee advocates – and refugees themselves – will also consider how members of the community can make their voices heard in the debate.

The sixth annual Weekend of Ideas, organised by Manning Clark House, takes place at the House on Saturday, March 31 and Sunday, April 1, beginning each day at 9am.

Speakers at the forum – entitled **A FAIR GO FOR REFUGEES?** – include:

- Refugees **Mahmoud Baqiri, Aguil de'Chut Deng** and **Riz Wakil**
- Law professor **Father Frank Brennan**
- Lawyer and refugee advocate **Julian Burnside QC**
- Co-founder, Rural Australians for Refugees, **Anne Coombs**
- Refugee advocate, Asylum Seeker Resource Centre, **Pamela Curr**
- Senior DIMA official **Peter Hughes**
- Refugee advocate **Marion Le OAM**
- Journalist and author **David Marr**
- Former Federal Court justice **Ronald Merkel QC**
- National director, Amnesty International **Mara Moustafine**
- ABC TV *Four Corners* journalist **Deb Whitmont**

They'll talk about what makes a civil society, the current Australian refugee system, the human impact of immigration policies, how social action on behalf of refugees has emerged, how the media cover the issues – and more.

"The Canberra *Weekend of Ideas* is a feast of talking, listening, eating and drinking in the beautiful gardens of Manning Clark House," says Penny Ramsay, Manning Clark House director.

"It's a great chance to discuss the refugee question in all its aspects, under a large open marquee. It's informal – and everyone's welcome!"

Saturday's sessions conclude with the fifth annual Dymphna Clark Lecture, to be delivered by writer and president of Australians Against Racism **Dr Eva Sallis**.

For more information, a forum program, to arrange interviews, contact Weekend coordinator Sandy Forbes, (02) 6295 9433 or email manningclark@ozemail.com.au

Manning Clark House, a lively cultural and scholarly centre, is based in Canberra at the former home of historian Manning Clark and linguist Dymphna Clark.

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