



## ABSTRACT

*This undergraduate thesis examines the policy regarding asylum seekers and refugees in Australia, including the policy pattern and the question of why the issue is still unresolved until today. Asylum seeker and refugee issues have become one of the most contentious and well-publicized in Australian politics in recent history. Insatiable and sensationalist media coverage has been accompanied by both political parties making a 'wedge issue' of the plight of desperate people seeking a better life in Australia. This paper begins by providing a policy overview of approaches by the Labor and Liberal-National coalition parties during their time in government, and then specifically analyze policy approaches undertaken during the prime ministerial reigns of John Howard, Kevin Rudd, Julia Gillard and Tony Abbott. A clear policy pattern focuses on 'border security' and prevention have been used to limit the numbers of those trying to reach Australian territory. Using the Rational Actor theory, the research concludes that draconian policy approaches is an election vote-winner and thus relates to the self-interest of each of the prime ministers. Considering this, the research concludes that a change in refugee and asylum seeker narrative, along with a leader of government with both ideological and moral motive, is needed to produce a more 'humane' set of policy approaches.*

*Keywords: Asylum seeker and refugee, policy pattern, border security, Rational Actor*