

# The politicisation of seeking asylum

Manus Prison theory and Australia's response to asylum seekers

Asylum seekers have occupied a particular place in the Australian national imaginary, particularly in the post-Tampa era after 2001. Over that time, successive Australian governments have pursued a militarised enforcement approach to national borders when it comes to people seeking asylum. This includes the implementation of 'Operation Sovereign Borders' – the consolidation of a mandatory offshore detention and processing policy for anyone seeking asylum who arrives by boat and the controversial and dangerous 'tow-back policy'. There has been a range of policy and legislative changes that have made seeking asylum in Australia more difficult, such as indefinite processing times, denying access to family reunion and government-funded legal assistance, and removing the right to independent reviews of refugee claims, among others. There are also operations that systematically censor information regarding asylum seekers - restricting media access to detention facilities, controlling information flows, and leveraging positions of power to manage the narrative. The most controversial and intractable has been the offshoring of immigration of detention to the countries of Nauru and Papua New Guinea (Manus Island). The symposium will be informed by the Manus Prison theory that has been further developed by the analysis of former Manus detainee Behrouz Boochani and his translator and collaborator, Omid Tofighian.

This interdisciplinary symposium will therefore take an overtly political and innovative conceptual approach to this problem. Honouring, applying and extending the legacy of Behrouz and Omid's work on Manus Prison theory, the symposium will highlight a body of work that seeks to examine these systems and structures so as to better understand how seeking asylum has been politicised in the Australian context, and what impact this has on Australian society more broadly.

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## ALL WELCOME

FREE EVENT

Online seminar

**Wednesday October 28, 2020**

10am-1pm (AEST, Sydney)

Register at Eventbrite:

<https://politicsseekasylum.eventbrite.com.au>

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## CONVENORS

**Rachel Sharples**

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## KEYNOTE SPEAKER

**Alison Mountz**

Wilfrid Laurier University

## SPEAKERS

**Behrouz Boochani**

Ngi Tahu Research Centre, Canterbury University/UNSW

**Omid Tofighian**

UNSW/University of Sydney

**Claire Loughnan**

University of Melbourne

**Andrew Burridge**

Macquarie University

**Anne McNevin**

The New School

**Maria Giannacopoulos**

Flinders University

**Julie Macken**

Western Sydney University



## STRUCTURE

10.00-10.10 Introduction

10.10-10.30 Keynote speaker

10.30-11.30 Speakers

11.30-12.30 Panel discussion

12.30-12.50 Audience Q&A

12.50-1.00 Concluding remarks

