



**Official press release by the Tamil Refugee Council**

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### ***GILLARD GOVERNMENT DUPLICITY ON ASYLUM SEEKERS EXPOSED***

**Melbourne, Friday** --The Gillard Government's duplicity in its campaign on Tamil and Sinhalese asylum seekers has been laid bare by a report detailing Sri Lankan Government involvement in the flow of boats to Australia.

The Australian newspaper today reveals that Australian intelligence has identified a senior Sri Lankan Government official believed to be responsible for allowing "numerous" boats to leave Sri Lankan shores in the past 10 months.

The report said the intelligence assessments have been "widely-known at senior levels" of the Gillard Government for some time.

A spokesman for the Tamil Refugee Council, Trevor Grant, said today: "We have suspected this all along. It would be virtually impossible for so many boats to leave such a small island without co-operation from the Sri Lankan Navy, and its' Government.

"What is deeply-concerning is that the Gillard Government has known about this person's actions for some time but has done nothing about it.

"Even when the Foreign Minister Bob Carr went to Sri Lanka last December to talk about the increased flow of asylum-seeker boats with high-ranking officials, including the president, he did not mention it.

"Yet at the same time he offered \$45 million of Australian taxpayers' money to supposedly help stop the boats, knowing full well that there was corruption going on within Government ranks.

"He knew a senior Sri Lankan Government official was very much involved in helping the boats leave and no doubt profiting from it, and still handed over our money.

"Carr also launched a \$700,000 advertising campaign in Sri Lanka in what he called 'people-smuggling hot spots' to stop the trade, knowing a major hot-spot was within the circle of Government officials he was talking to. But he didn't have the guts to bring up what he knew with these people.

"This is disgraceful behaviour on the part of Carr and the Government and a full explanation is required. No doubt they will try to hide behind the so-called need for secrecy and say 'we do not comment on intelligence reports'. But this Government owes the people of Australia the truth about this sordid affair."

Suspicions about Sri Lankan Government involvement in the flow of boats from the island were first raised publicly late last year by former Australian deputy high commissioner to Sri Lanka, Bruce Haigh.

Haigh told Melbourne radio, 3CR, that he had heard through his sources that there was considerable “alarm” amongst Australian officials about Sri Lankan Government officials profiting from the flow of asylum-seeker boats. He said the well-equipped Sri Lankan Navy had the capacity to ensure that no boats left such a small island.

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