



# SURF COAST RURAL AUSTRALIANS FOR REFUGEES

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Surf Coast Rural Australians for Refugees is a community organisation of people living in the Surf Coast and Bellarine Peninsula areas of Victoria. Our first public meeting was in December 2002. We now have a mailing list of over 500 supporters.

Over 11 years of operation, we have raised over \$60,000 for asylum seekers and refugees through concerts, markets and donations. We produce a regular newsletter, offer friendship and support to asylum seekers and refugees, and challenge MPs on refugee issues.

One of our key goals is to see the closure of detention centres in their present form.

Our submission to the Inquiry calls for

- Urgent steps to be taken to end the indefinite nature of detention. Health, security and identity checks should be done within 30 days. Any detention after this period should be decided by independent judicial review.

We urge authorities to

- Ensure children and their families are removed from detention as promptly as practicable.
- End remote detention. If people are moved more rapidly through detention there will not be a need for more and more centres. Community groups, support and appropriate care are far accessible in and around our capital cities.

Please take into account

The damaging impact, ineffectiveness and spiralling costs of mandatory detention

- Mental health impacts of detention are well documented: 5 suicides in around 6 months, self harm, hunger strikes, people on suicide watch, isolation - none of this is effective.
- The Minister himself has said that detention is a management tool not a deterrent. (Chris Bowen, [The Age 10 Feb 2011](#))
- In the 2011-12 budget, \$800 million has been allocated to detention costs, a tripling in just two years

We hope that the Joint Select Committee will give serious consideration to all these matters and that the Committee's report will reflect the urgent need to reform the way Australia deals with asylum seekers.

Yours sincerely

Jan Hale  
Secretary  
Surf Coast Rural Australians for Refugees