

Dear Sirs

I am opposed to mandatory detention of asylum seekers.

I believe as a Christian that we have a duty to care for “the stranger” and “aliens” within our country, as well as compassion for the most vulnerable. And I have been involved with several cases of people who were in detention for a number of years which have caused me to consider deeply the consequences of their treatment after arrival in Australia.

One of the people I got to know while he was in detention was later deported to Baghdad and, after investigation of his case by the Edmund Rice Centre, is now missing presumed dead. The other two are now Australian citizens but both severely psychologically damaged by their detention experience. They are committed to this country and their future here. One was stateless and never had a country he could call his own before he became a citizen.

These people and many others cannot enjoy a normal life because of their psychological problems, that persist many years after their release. They continue to be a cost to the government in terms of social welfare. This is quite unnecessary. If their cases had been promptly reviewed and they had been given more certainty about the outcome at an early stage, they would not be suffering now.

Other countries can review cases without locking people up. I think Australia can do that too. It would cost far less. It would be more humane. It would have better outcomes for everyone.

Yours truly,

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