

Committee Secretary
Joint select Committee on Australia's
Immigration Detention Network
PO Box 6100 Parliament House
Canberra, ACT 2600

Halina Strnad

6.8.2011.

Re: Inquiry into Australia's Immigration Detention Network.

Dear Secretary

I submit my comments based on personal experience.

In 1948 I sought asylum from war-torn, Stalinist Poland and arrived in Australia on the ill-famed boat "Derna".

Total strangers helped me to find accommodation and work as a cleaner. After part-time study I graduated in Medical Science and worked in major pathology departments - Alfred Hospital and Metropolitan Pathology - for 48 years. In retirement I am a volunteer in projects dealing with youth homelessness and with education of Indigenous children.

Several Aussie families regard me as an honorary member : 'sister'/ 'aunt'/ and 'grannie'.

I am so very grateful for the welcome on my arrival here. Given similar help and opportunities many of the present-day asylum seekers, 'the boat people' would bond with the locals the way I did, and become productive members of our society.

But if their prolonged incarceration and fears of deportation to their place of origin persist, their mental and physical health will be damaged, as shown by instances of self-harm, suicides and other acts of desperation.

On their behalf I plead for :

1. A more humane treatment, a 'fair go',
2. A fast processing of health, identity and security checks,
3. Release into community centres not longer than three month after arrival.

If not ameliorated, our present harsh treatment of seekers of asylum will be seen by future generations as a dark period of our history. They will wonder what possessed us.

Yours sincerely

Halina Strnad