

**Submission
to the
Joint Select Committee on Australia's Immigration Detention Network**

Kevin and Maureen Liston

The opportunity to provide a submission to the Committee on this important matter is appreciated.

We are concerned regarding the following.

1. The impact of detention on people who are already severely traumatised by their experiences before arriving in Australia. We are particularly concerned for children who are heavily scarred by these experiences in their formative years.
2. The effectiveness of detention. The reasons for mandatory detention revolve around questions of security, identity and disease. (We note that the Minister has excluded deterrence as a justification for mandatory detention - The Age, 10 Feb 2011). The Australian experience of having other asylum seekers in the community over many years has not shown that this group (illegal maritime arrivals) causes any more problems in relation to security, identity or the spread of disease.
3. The cost of mandatory detention. These costs are enormous and a major drain on limited resources (\$800 million in the 2011-12 budget).
4. The mental health impacts of detention are well documented. Five suicides in around six months, self harm, hunger strikes, holding people on suicide watch or in isolation are evidence of a harmful and failing system.

We submit as follows.

1. The Australian government should bring to an end the indefinite nature of detention for asylum seekers in Australia. The purpose of detention is to provide an opportunity to ascertain whether or not people are a likely threat to Australia. If no indication of the likelihood of this (in relation to health, identity or security) is uncovered within 30 days, people should be allowed to live in the community while awaiting the outcomes of their applications.
2. Children and their immediate families should be given priority in relation to health, security and identity checks so that they can be released from detention as soon as possible, without having to wait for 30 days.
3. While in detention, families with children should be accommodated in family-friendly housing, such as that at Inverbrackie in South Australia, to reduce the risk of further trauma for the children.

4. Detention for more than 30 days should be subject to judicial review.
5. Detention centres should be located within reasonable distance of significant centres of population and services, not in remote areas. Access to community groups, support and appropriate care is far more likely in and around our capital cities. In such circumstances, detainees would be more likely to respond positively to their surroundings and processing requirements.
6. The policy declared in the New Directions in Detention (August 2008) should be implemented in full.

If further comment or clarification is required, we be happy to provide it.

Kevin and Maureen Liston
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