

SUBMISSION TO SENATE ENQUIRY INTO OFF-SHORE PROCESSING AND RE-SETTLEMENT ARRANGEMENTS

Submission of Maryanne Barclay, Co-ordinator, Dunkley Grandmothers for Refugees

Inquiry into offshore processing and resettlement arrangements

My name is Maryanne Barclay of [REDACTED], Victoria and I am writing on behalf of the Dunkley Grandmothers for Refugees to the committee because I have received information about regional processing in the course of my duties.

In my role as co-ordinator of this community-based, volunteer group, I have access to reliable information about Australia's offshore processing regime and the impact it has had on people seeking asylum, the wider community and internationally. I am grateful to the committee for accepting my submission, in which I will outline my concerns with Australia's offshore processing and resettlement arrangements on Nauru and in Papua New Guinea. Specifically, my submission will focus on the policy failure in relation to offshore detention and how offshore processing negatively impacts people detained. I understand that the Committee will have particular reference to offshore processing and resettlement arrangements since 2022. However, it is not possible to fully understand these arrangements without considering the harm caused by offshore processing over more than 13 years. The way this policy operated in the past has directly shaped how it operates today.

The Policy Failure that is Off-shore Detention

Off-shore processing has been, and continues to be, a massive and costly policy failure which Australia cannot justify or allow to continue. Despite the claims of successive governments, it has not achieved any of the stated objectives and has done untold harm to individuals and to Australia's international reputation. The practice of sending asylum seekers to remote, hostile locations for an indefinite period needs to end and never be allowed to start again. Three key reasons are outlined below.

Financial Cost.

As has been clearly documented elsewhere, there is a huge cost to offshore processing. If the objective is to determine a person's refugee status in a transparent and timely manner, then offshore detention is not the way to achieve the goal. Further, much has been written in the media about the alleged corruption of service providers, which adds weight to this argument. In contrast, short-term, community-based detention should be the model, with fair and timely processing of applications for asylum.

Human Cost

In my role as an advocate for people seeking asylum, I have heard moving first-hand accounts of the harm done by indefinite detention in remote places such as Manus. I have also heard high profile survivors of the offshore regime speak with great eloquence about the lasting negative impact of their inhumane treatment. There are lifelong impacts of being treated with such cruelty, being punished and kept in the dark about your future. I know that there are men, so damaged by being kept on PNG for years, that they are too unwell to participate in any discussion about their

future. We have destroyed these people and still do not accept responsibility for their welfare.

□ **Reputational Damage**

The fatally flawed policy of offshore detention and processing is being conducted in direct contravention of the rules of international law and has been the subject of numerous legal challenges.

I am the daughter of a Hungarian Jewish refugee who came to this country in 1939, the only member of his family to survive World War 2. At that time, and for enlightened periods since then, Australia welcomed refugees and celebrated their contribution to our prosperity and diversity. How have we come to this, where we disregard international law, where we vilify and punish people seeking refuge?

In conclusion, an enquiry into offshore processing must consider the harm that has been done – the financial cost, the human cost and the reputational damage. I respectfully urge you to recommend in the strongest possible terms, that it ends now.

I will leave you with a quote from former Prime Minister, Malcolm Fraser, who advocated fearlessly for refugees, both when he was in office and in retirement.

“If they are genuine refugees, there is no deterrent that we can create which is going to be severe enough, cruel enough, nasty enough to stop them fleeing the terror in their own lands” (2013)

Thank you for considering my submission. I am available at the convenience of the committee.

Maryanne Barclay
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