

## **Submission to the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Public Works**

### **Proposed Melbourne Immigration Transit Accommodation Project, Broadmeadows, Victoria**

February 10, 2017

Dear Sir/Madam

I make this submission in relation to the proposed Melbourne Immigration Transit Accommodation Project, Broadmeadows.

I am a long time resident of Hume and am writing this submission to express a number of concerns in relationship to the MITA Broadmeadows proposal and proposed changes to the existing format of MITA Broadmeadows.

My first concern relates to the lack of notification and information by the Federal Government to the local community. I was made aware of this proposal only by chance on January 20<sup>th</sup>, the day after the initial due date of submissions. When once made aware of the proposal I found it difficult to find any information and found the website [http://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary\\_Business/Committees/Joint/Public\\_Works/MITAProject](http://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Committees/Joint/Public_Works/MITAProject) problematic.

The proposal was released on December 1, 2016 with the initial due date set for January 19, 2016. The timing of this coincided with the Christmas holiday period; during this time many people are on holidays and local community groups and organisations closed or working at reduced capacity. By releasing this proposal at this time it effectively impeded the local community in their ability to gain knowledge about it.

The failure by the Federal Government to implement a consultative process with the local community and provide sufficient information is inequitable and unreasonable. The community is amongst stakeholders that the MITA proposal will impact on; the Federal Government has an obligation to consult, inform and collaborate with all affected parties. Whilst I acknowledge and appreciate the extension of time in allowing submissions I consider it is imperative that, for the community to be able to have a voice regarding this proposal there is put in place provisions to provide the local community with extensive information on the proposal, and a process to enable community input via consultations and public meetings is established and that an acceptable time frame is allocated.

Secondly I find the language in the proposal to be more indicative of a high security prison rather than an accommodation unit for immigrants in transit. I do not consider what is effectively a high security prison to house those with "criminal convictions and links to organised crime or outlaw motorcycle gangs." conducive to the safety and well being of the local community nor to those low risk persons that are currently housed at MITA.

MITA as it currently operates houses low-risk detainees (predominantly asylum seekers and visa overstayer's, who are not criminals); the proposal to co-locate these detainees with high-risk individuals creates the situation where their safety, health, mental wellbeing, access to support services and visitors are potentially negatively impacted.

Thirdly I question the value of this proposal to the local community. Broadmeadows and Hume have one of the highest unemployment rates in the state with a youth unemployment rate quoted at around 20%. In 2015 the Dropping of the Edge report compiled by Jesuit Social Services and Catholic Social Services Australia found

Broadmeadows to be the most disadvantaged suburb in Victoria. The land being used for MITA would be better used to provide a site for business and industry to address the issue of high unemployment and serve the community in a practical way. It is my understanding that a study commissioned by the Hume City Council found that the site has the potential to create around 4000 direct and indirect jobs in Hume.

Regarding the statement in the proposal that “the City of Hume supports the presence of the MITA within its local authority.” I believe this statement to be untrue as it is my belief that the Hume Council has advocated against a detention centre in Broadmeadows.

Additionally as stated in the MITA proposal Hume is “one of Australia’s fastest growing and culturally diverse communities and home to more than 198,000 residents coming from more than 160 different countries and speaking approximately 140 languages.” Hume is also earmarked to receive a large number of the estimated 12,000 Syrian refugees being resettled in Australia. This proposal by the Federal Government to spend \$29 million plus on what is effectively a strong-arm, punitive facility does not align with the values of our community or support us in enabling a cohesive and socially responsible, supportive multicultural diverse community nor does not provide constructive investment in our community.

I thank you for your time and would value your response and would ask that I have the opportunity to further elaborate on the points I have raised at the public hearing scheduled for Broadmeadows.

Submitted by

Sheriden Tate