

Migration Amendment (Repairing Medical Transfers) Bill 2019 (Provisions)

Submission to Inquiry

My name is Evol McLeod. I am the President of Yass Rural Australians for Refugees. Our group is affiliated with Rural Australians for Refugees.

On behalf of Yass Rural Australians for Refugees (YRAR) I would like to respectfully submit our reasons for requesting the Senate reject the Bill to repeal the Medevac legislation.

1. There is abundant evidence, as provided by Medical personnel working on Manus and Nauru that there are inadequate facilities in PNG and Nauru thus limiting capacity to treat serious medical conditions. The Governor of Manus Island has publicly acknowledged they are unable to treat and manage the mental health crisis now in evidence with many of the refugees and asylum seekers detained on Manus Island.

It was an important, timely and ethical Parliamentary decision to pass the Medevac Bill in 2019. it should not be repealed.

2. In its current form the Medevac Legislation provides processes involving medical advice , and scrutiny by the Minister. The Minister can refuse the transfer on medical grounds or on the basis of security or character. YRAR believes the processes outlined within the Medevac Legislation provide adequate safeguards for the management of those refugees and asylum seekers on Manus and Nauru to be evacuated if deemed necessary. The current Legislation is modest and under Medevac, the government has approved 90 medical transfers. Of the 20 which were refused, none were on the basis of security or character grounds. The Legislation has been working. To repeal it appears to be founded on exaggerated fears of weakening Australia's borders . YRAR submits that the Medevac Processes provide totally adequate safeguards with both Medical and Ministerial involved throughout the process of determining eligibility for transfer.

3. There has been considerable International attention on Australia's treatment of asylum seekers and refugees, particularly in relation to the detaining of men, women and children in offshore detention centres. Over the past few years it has been sobering to see the reports of our government's treatment of asylum seekers, our nation's non- compliance with the United Nations Refugee Convention Act as reported in International journals and newspapers.

YRAR urges the Committee to reject the motion to repeal the Medevac Bill on the basis of decency - the humane treatment of Asylum seekers and refugees. We believe there is an urgent need to demonstrate to our own citizens, and the International community, that the Australian Parliament's passing of the Medevac Bill was a step to ensure more humane and ethical treatment of detainees on Manus and Nauru . We believe that to repeal it would appear mean spirited, spiteful and disrespectful of the many professionals engaged in preparing the original Bill, passed by our former Parliament

Should you have any questions regarding this submission please contact me

Yours sincerely
Evol McLeod OAM