

11<sup>th</sup> August 2010

To Joint Select Committee on Australia's Immigration Detention Network

From Ms Mev Bardiqi

Dear Joint Select Committee on Australia's Immigration Detention Network,

This is a personal submission and hereby I present to you my voice. Though, many of my Australian counterparts that I have discussions with are as appalled over the Malaysia deal and a permanent detention center, as I am. I am writing to you from Kenya, where I arrived to finish my Masters project in community development. I could arrive here by air, land, sea. Having waited in some queue or not, it matters not in the privileged treatment I receive. I guess, here I thought I draw a small comparison of the place I am at present to my home country Australia. Kenya is surrounded by hostility, and it has accepted hundreds of refugees for decades, with its limited economic capacity. I hear no voice here that bashes, undermines, demonizes, stigmatizes refugees; I must say much contrary to what happens in Australia. I dare not open my mouth and mention to my colleagues that a country such as Australia (well respected and perceived abroad) has many detention centers in which we make people suffer and despair.

The list of reasons as to why Australia should abolish this 'status quo' is long in deed. Inhumane, degrading, humiliating, against cultural norms and conventions. Evidence suggests people are driven to mental and emotional despair, and self-harm, all as a result of being locked up.

I have lived in Dandenong, south east of Melbourne for twenty years now. On my initial arrival it looked dull and empty...I watch all around me the beautification of my town, full of life and business flourishing. All the creativity poured in it, and needless to mention economic benefits to Australians living in the area. And where is this all from: the so called boat people. Those that have endured grief and unspeakable loss, and prolonged detentions in Australia, somehow made it out, and turned all that into prosperity, dignity and livelihood for their families and the rest of the community too.

This policy has proven detrimental, counterproductive, shameful, unlawful, degrading and an embarrassment to us with a conscience and the ability to think outside the square.

The government of Australia should feel accountable to its people, and not the opposition party, and in maintain this draconian detention policy it is proving the case.

I say, abolish the detention centers, replace them with humane mechanisms of support. I am ready to contribute.

Kind Regards

Ms Mev Bardiqi