

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS

Mr Robert Oakeshott MP

This inquiry has been a detailed examination of one of Australia's most challenging issues and I endorse the recommendations of the majority report of the committee. I am particularly pleased to see greater confidence emerging through the successes of community detention, as well as a recommendation to address the anomalies regarding the rights of appeal to ASIO security checks. Both of these have important policy implications for improving just and timely results within this process, even though it is acknowledged both are laced with political controversy in modern Australian debate.

I therefore thank Committee Chair Mr Daryl Melham MP for the manner in which he has conducted the inquiry.

The report and the recommendations are detailed. My reason for some additional comments is to emphasise the longer-term strategy for detention in Australia, and how this relates to the broader, longer-term plans for tackling people smuggling, people trafficking, related transnational crime and immigration.

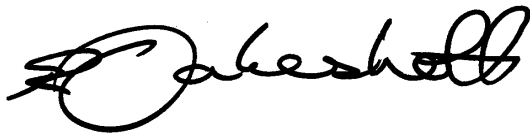
I would hope Australia, in the long-term, commits to:

- all arrivals being treated consistently by Australian law, regardless of the method of arrival;
- greater use of alternatives to mandatory detention, with mandatory detention being the option of last resort, if at all;
- keeping families together;
- greater regional consideration and engagement on all relevant issues related to mandatory detention within Australia, including greater investment in regional co-operation strategies on people smuggling, people trafficking and related transnational crime, as well as even greater investment in regional strategies on refugee assessment and orderly settlement;
- Australia pursuing more vigorously the longer-term strategy of regional assessment, detention and settlement. Australia, wherever possible, should be seeking opportunities to integrate domestic and international law into all legal considerations relevant to the concept of detention and alternatives to detention;
- Greater access to the use of transparent, timely, consistent, and relevant data across all agencies, and making best use of this data to improve all considerations relevant to the concept of detention and alternatives to detention;
- Australia leading the Asia-Pacific region in developing strong regional protocols for transparent, timely, consistent, and relevant data and information

swapping across jurisdictions, particularly with transit countries and wherever possible source countries. This is to assist with timely assessment, as well as assisting with minimising people smuggling, people trafficking, and related transnational crime; and

- a detention policy in Australia that integrates with other areas of Government policy. Some examples include but are not limited to policies on rural workforce shortage, the ability or not to access HECS in education whilst in detention, regional development, sports and the arts.

This is an important report that Government should consider carefully as part of an overall review of all aspects of refugee and asylum seeker policy in Australia. I do challenge Government that this isn't put in the political "too hard basket", and that sensible reform occurs as a consequence of this extensive and detailed work.



Mr Robert Oakeshott MP



Mr Daryl Melham MP