

SUBMISSION TO THE SENATE INQUIRY IN RELATION TO THE
IMMIGRATION DEPARTMENT.

Amanda Kube
Mount Isa
Queensland

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To the Inquiry,

I am just a teacher and a Mum but I found myself involved in refugee and asylum-seeker support and advocacy after watching the horrors of the Tampa situation unfold in 2001.

Since that time I have become part of Rural Australians For Refugees and have become involved in local community awareness-raising and have written to politicians on many occasions to call for a change to our current mandatory detention policy.

I have also visited asylum-seekers in detention and have developed friendships with refugees on Temporary Protection Visas.

I have also made it my business to read books and articles on the issue of mandatory detention in Australia.

Through all these different avenues some common threads have developed. Our current mandatory detention system is inhumane and DIMIA operates on a system that assumes asylum-seekers are making false claims. This creates a climate of suspicion and mistrust on the part of DIMIA officials processing claims.

The Refugee Review Tribunal is a huge problem. The 'tribunal' is usually one person who is not independent and this person is often insufficiently trained to carry out the task. Language issues are a big problem with these first interviews and the following processes of appeal could be avoided if the original interview was conducted more independently and professionally and in line with the UNHCR's Convention.

The TPV does not allow families to reunite once a family member is given refugee status. I have witnessed the pain and suffering this causes to people who cannot travel to be with their loved ones or bring them to Australia.

I have also witnessed first hand the mental and emotional damage to asylum-seekers caused by long-term incarceration in our detention centres. I have witnessed the depression and suicidal thoughts that these people live with day to day. I have also witnessed the extreme rules and regulations in detention centres - for example, our children could not sing some songs to our friend while visiting, no photos could be taken of our detained friends.

I am conscious that I am not a lawyer or qualified advocate but I urge the inquiry in the strongest possible way to conduct a full and thorough independent investigation into the way DIMIA abuses its power and continues to mistreat asylum-seekers and refugees.

Yours truly,

Amanda Kube.