

Inquiry into the administration and operation of the Migration Act 1958

Submission by:

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I submit that

Refugees should be treated with dignity and compassion from the moment they arrive

- Detention centres are not appropriate accommodation for newly arrived, generally traumatised people. New arrivals, and all other refugees should be housed in the community.
- The whole process of processing and assessment of visa applications should be humanised. People should not be known as numbers.

Treatment of refugees should not be used as an example to others, unless that example is one of compassion.

- People should not be detained as an example to others who might want to come.
- People should not be thrown into solitary confinement as an example to others
- Retribution should not be taken against refugees who speak out, to prevent others from speaking out.

Outsourcing

- It is not appropriate to have the administration of detention centres outsourced. Any processes involving refugees should be carried out by the government or caring third parties, not profit making entities. The whole process should be totally transparent, and the government wholly accountable. Access to refugees and their accommodation should be available if the community expresses concern about treatment.

Healthcare and mental health services

It is patently obvious that healthcare and mental health services are not adequate at immigration detention centres. The many examples of people suffering mental illness as a result of detention, following on from previous traumatic experiences is appalling, we as Australians should be ashamed. Given that these people are in general, recognised as true refugees, from the moment they arrive we should be supporting their integration into the community – giving them everything that they may need to be productive Australian citizens. Putting newcomers on arrival into a situation that creates mental health problems is inhumane and short-sighted.

On release into the community, refugees should be given immediate access to all the health and mental health services that they may need, free of cost, and in their own language (through bi-lingual workers or interpreters).

Deportation

Stories of refugees going missing after deportation are also appalling – we have to take full responsibility. If we as Australians cannot guarantee their safety in the country that they are sent to, then they should not be deported.

Regards

Elizabeth Gibbings

29th July 2005.