

Subject:

Inquiry into the provisions of the Migration Amendment (Designated Unauthorised Arrivals) Bill 2006.

I present to you my objections to the Bill which proposes to amend the Migration Act 1958 to expand the offshore processing regime currently applying to offshore entry persons and transitory persons to include, all persons arriving at mainland Australia (meaning other than at an excised offshore place) unlawfully by sea on or after 13th April 2006.

Australia was an early signatory to the major humanitarian international strategies designed to bring about a just and peaceful world, such as the principal that "everyone has a right to freedom from persecution". This government has a history of disregarding these procedures in relation to its treatment of refugees. It is a stand which can only be described as selfish, cruel and politically opportunist. It is a part of our history which has brought us shame and will be looked back at in disbelief. It callously denies the situation that caused the asylum seekers to embark on such a dangerous journey.

I have communicated by letter and telephone with families and individuals detained on Nauru between 2002 and 2005. I have met more than 20 men, women, adolescents and children since their release over the last eleven months. I have heard from them and witnessed the detrimental effects of offshore processing of refugees under Australia's Pacific Solution. The points I make below refer in particular to Nauru, one of the proposed sites for future arrivals.

It is well documented that the processing of asylum seekers by the Australian Government is less than compassionate and just.. Refugee status being determined by Department of Immigration officials, without the safety net of a review by the Refugee Review Tribunal or Judicial review cannot be considered satisfactory.

The long time of uncertainty spent in detention on Nauru increased the trauma experienced by the asylum seekers in such a way that has caused serious mental health disorders, for adults and children, which they continue to struggle with, even though it is almost twelve months since their release

A Detention Centre is no place to bring up children. One of the children I am in touch with is now fifteen years old. He was ten years old when he arrived on Nauru. When I recently complimented him, on his communication skills he told me how he sat in isolation and didn't talk and didn't play at all during the years on Nauru. He always felt worried and frightened.

According to the DIMIA Fact Sheet Offshore Processing Arrangements the Pacific Strategy has cost \$188 million from its inception in September 2001 to June 2004. The high cost of this inhumanity could be better spent in displaying humanity to the asylum seekers while they are being processed.

Policy making in relation to asylum seekers appears to be made according to political expediency in this case appeasing the Indonesian Government.

I am very concerned about the introduction of this bill because of the shortcomings experienced by the earlier use of the Pacific Solution and it's adverse reflection on Australia as a just and democratic nation.

Yours sincerely,

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