

Committee Secretary
Senate Legal and Constitutional Committee
Department of the Senate
Parliament House
Canberra ACT

Sir/Madam

I wish to make a submission to the inquiry into the provisions of the Migration Amendment (Designated Unauthorised Arrivals) Bill 2006. This is essentially a personal statement, but I hope it will be considered with other submissions.

My family and I are deeply concerned at the inhumane treatment of already traumatised asylum seekers who come to this country seeking refuge, whether by boat or any other means. The maltreatment shown to these people, locking them up like criminals, women and children included, brings shame upon this country.

The proposed offshore refugee processing laws which the Howard Government seeks to put in place, coupled with various administrative arrangements cutting across a number of portfolios, raise the prospect of breaches of international law and violations of our international obligations.

As bad as the Tampa laws were, they concerned "secondary movers" - refugees who had fled from their homelands and had arrived in places like Malaysia and Indonesia before attempting to land in Australia. Papuan refugees, on the other hand, are fleeing directly from a country of persecution and are in a qualitatively different position.

Even if this process is again applied to asylum seekers other than Papuans from Indonesia, it will still retain all the shortcomings experienced in the earlier use of the disgraceful "Pacific solution".

All this is at the expense of unfortunate people who are fleeing well documented persecution - persecution that will not be ameliorated but rather encouraged by the proposed changes. The Australian Government is effectively endorsing the persecution.

This proposal sends a clear signal to foreign powers that Australia is willing to change the laws governing its refugee protection system when pressure is applied to it by a foreign nation. The Australian Government causes us to hang our heads in shame at the very thought that our country could be so gutless and ingratiating.

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