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As an individual citizen of Australia I have grave concerns about the justice of the amendments proposed in the Migration, Amendment (Designated Unauthorised Arrivals) Bill 2006. While there is no doubt that Australia must protect the integrity of its borders and vet prospective members of our society, treating arrivals, primarily boat arrivals, so harshly is neither humane nor Australian.

Also of concern is why the changes are necessary in the first place. We are hardly flooded with arrivals. Developing a poor international reputation for our handling of arrivals seems to have halted the flow. The latest knee jerk proposals appear to be in response to the West Papuans. Today I heard a spokesman for Indonesia saying that Australia was a good neighbour and a result of our changed position in regard to arrivals, we were likely to get our Ambassador back again. So obviously the Indonesian see our amendments as being related to themselves. As a sovereign nation, while having regard for the working relationship with other nations, it is not in Australia's best interests to deal with oppressed people using the tools employed by less democratic nations. In the case of Indonesia, they are renowned for being immune to the pleas of other nations e.g Australia in regard to the death penalty for drug offenders.

I'm sure the costs of legal fees are great when we allow arrivals to put their case before our system, but this may be more a reflection of the dysfunctional system, than a consequence brought about by the arrivals themselves. The costs of running off shore facilities however are also substantial.

The Australia that I am proud to be a citizen of is a democratic, nominally Christian country that should be able to do better than excising the entire country from the Migration Act to deal with small numbers of arrivals. Instead of further damaging these people with detention, we should be welcoming and compassionate thereby advancing Australia with healthy, happy and productive new arrivals who can potentially contribute much to our society.

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