

Nancy and Mike Murphy

Risdon, Qld.

19.05.06

Committee Secretary  
Senate Legal and Constitutional Committee  
Department of the Senate  
PO Box 6100  
Parliament House  
Canberra ACT 2600

Dear Senate Committee Members,

We were stunned when the Federal Government recently announced how asylum seekers arriving by boat will be treated from now on. The changes follow the granting of protection to 42 Papuans who faced persecution in their homeland, in a welcome display of this country's obligation and good spirit.

We are greatly alarmed to think of asylum seekers being removed from Australia, sent to offshore centres and being held there until a "third country" provides refuge.

We are also deeply concerned over the proposal that the Australian Navy may forcibly return boats of asylum seekers to the very places they fled. This could have lethal effects on the fleeing to be given into the hands of their persecutors.

Doesn't our government care? We do, and so do many others. I ask you to consider with your eyes closed that you and your loved ones are in a boat coming here to try to stay alive. Then cast your vote or recommendation.

If these changes are adopted Australia will be in breach of international human rights law and they will be demeaning to the common decency of Australians. These proposed changes mean that children may again grow up in detention. This is despite the government's 2005 promise that "Children shall be detained as a measure of last resort."

Under the proposed laws refugees could face a lifetime in remote detention without access to fair and just Australian review procedures. Offshore detainees have no access to the Refugee Review Tribunal. Without this independent process Australia may be responsible for returning refugees to persecution, torture and, perhaps, death.

Please remember that Australia has an obligation to assist people fleeing persecution. This must not be ignored or responsibility shifted to other countries.

We ask you to call upon the government to abandon these proposed amendment to the Migration Act 1958. If the proposals go ahead we will ask all Federal Parliamentarians to oppose them.

It is in Australia's capacity and interest to act with compassion and decency and to give refugees the chance to become great Australians. To do less is truly un-Australian.

Please stand against this plan to process asylum seekers offshore for the reasons outlined above.

Sincerely and urgently,

Nancy and Mike Murphy