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

We are appalled to hear of the changes the Australian government is proposing in relation to treatment of asylum seekers reaching Australia by boat.

We can think back to our acceptance of Jews, Vietnamese and other boat people and the contribution many of these refugees have made here.

We cannot stay quiet when our government proposes that asylum seekers landing on our mainland or islands, be taken off-shore for indefinite imprisonment and then not accept them even if they are found to be genuine refugees! Senator Vanstone says it is not imprisonment but it is certainly not freedom. We know from past experience they will have little if any access to Australian aid, advice or support and our journalists will have little if any access to let us know how they are faring.

Australia is not a poor country. If we do this, and other countries do the same, what can a refugee do? We all know there is no such thing as an orderly queue of refugees in countries like West Papua, Afghanistan, Iran or Iraq.

The Tampa captain provided help to people in danger on the sea. Asking our navy to repel helpless asylum seekers is really asking our sailors to be inhumane on our behalf. How can we, our prime minister and our sailors sleep easy with that?

The proposed changes look like an expedient "fix" which would make very bad history for us.

In the name of humanity we urge the government to find a better way.

Can we influence Indonesia to find more humane personnel to administer West Papua so that autonomy can become a peaceful reality?

Yours sincerely,

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