

To members of the Senate Committee,

I am writing this very brief submission to the inquiry into the Migration Amendment Bill 2006 as a concerned citizen, and with the context of being a secondary school teacher who teaches refugee children and having been a community worker with the Uniting Church's Asylum Seeker Project (1998-1999).

I am horrified to hear that our government is proposing to send all asylum seekers who arrive by boat to another country for detention and processing. The justification seems to be that these people are arriving "unlawfully", therefore they are treated like criminals. I would like to point to our obligations as a nation under international law - especially the Refugees Convention. Article 31 states that "States shall not impose penalties, on account of their illegal entry or presence, on refugees who, coming directly from a territory where their life or freedom was threatened...".

Whether looking at this from a legal point of view or simply a humanitarian viewpoint, the amendment to the Migration Act is proposing sending people already traumatised to a place where there is no guarantee of their well being and human rights.

I want Australia to be a country of compassion, welcome and generosity not one of fear and ignorance.

Yours truly,

Philip Hudson
Footscray