

Submission: Deportation and Entry Ban Bill Rural Australians for Refugees

To: Committee Secretary
Legal and Constitutional Affairs Legislation Committee
Department of the Senate
PO Box 6100
Parliament House

From: Rural Australians for Refugees

Dear Committee Secretary,

Thank you on behalf of Rural Australians for Refugees for the opportunity to contribute to the discussion of the proposed Migration Amendment (Removals and Other Measures) Bill 2024.

Rural Australians for Refugees (RAR) is a national organisation established in 2001 in the Southern Highlands of NSW. Today RAR comprises about 90 RAR group members and associates across Australia. Each RAR group is based in a rural or regional location and has membership ranging from 10 people to 400 people. Hence we represent many thousands of ordinary Australians from all walks of life, who believe that refugees and people seeking asylum need to be treated with fairness and compassion, in line with Australian values and international law. RAR is a volunteer-based organization.

RAR groups:

- provide material and social assistance to refugees and people seeking asylum
- advocate for humane and constructive changes to Australia's refugee and immigration policies.

Rural Australians for Refugees wishes to offer its strong opposition for the passage of this legislation on the following grounds

This bill punishes and criminalises refugees and people seeking asylum. There is far too much negative talk about refugees in the community at the moment, and from our knowledge of people in this situation, further criminalisation of the status of 'refugee' or 'asylum seeker' simply adds to their anxiety while here, and does nothing to help them to begin new lives in the country which they have asked to protect them. Instead, this legislation does the opposite

At the last election, Australians voted for humane and compassionate policies for refugees and people seeking asylum. Rural Australians for Refugees is calling on our Government and political leaders to move towards that caring, decent country we know Australia can be. We believe that the bill goes against Australia's values of

democracy and fairness, by giving the Minister unchecked powers to deport people from Australia and prevent people from entering Australia. Rural Australians for Refugees calls on the Australian Government to honour its obligations, both in the letter and the spirit, contained in the 1951 Refugee Convention by not returning people to countries where they face serious threats to their life or freedom.

The proposed Entry Ban and Deportation Bill will result in families being ripped apart and people forced to return to countries where they face persecution and even death. Many Australian citizens and permanent residents who have family living overseas will not be able to see loved ones if they are among countries targeted in the Minister's travel ban.

Further, the bill permits refugees to be deported to third countries, including countries where they have no connection or support network, which will leave them vulnerable to persecution and harm.

Rural Australians for Refugees strongly opposes the passage of this legislation.

The Rev'd Dr. D. Paul Dalzell

(President, for and on behalf of Rural Australians for Refugees)