

22 February 2023

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



Dear Committee Secretary.

Re: Inquiry into the Migration Amendment (Evacuation to Safety) Bill 2023

Amnesty International Amnesty Bendigo Group welcomes the opportunity to contribute to the Committee's inquiry into the Migration Amendment (Evacuation to Safety) Bill 2023.

Amnesty International Australia has over 11,000 supporters in the Federal Electorate of Bendigo. We advocate for the rights of refugees and people seeking asylum in Australia, and support the principles of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights that declares that every human being has the right to seek asylum and the protection of another nation.

Amnesty International Amnesty Bendigo Group strongly supports the Bill, which would compel the Government to offer to transfer to Australia to all persons subject to offshore processing still in PNG or Nauru within one month of the commencement of the Bill.

There are currently around 60 people still on Nauru, and 90 people in PNG.

This Bill must be passed.

Australia created a dire situation for those sought safety in our country, but instead have been trapped in PNG and Nauru against their will for up to a decade. Over the decade many serious health issues have arisen. Some people are now in a critical condition. People need to be urgently transferred to Australia, and supported as they receive the medical treatment they need. The improvement in the health of people previously transferred from offshore is testament to the need for this Bill.

This situation was created by an Australian Government and must be resolved by this Australian Government. It is the responsibility of Australia, not other countries, to provide urgent medical care and uphold the rights of those people who came to Australia seeking asylum.

The Labor Government's position:

The Labor Party Platform 2021 states: "Labor will ensure asylum seekers who arrive by irregular means **will not be punished for their mode of arrival** ... [Labor **will**] **Improve the medical transfer process.**"

In Opposition, the ALP also supported the *Medevac Bill*.

More recently, Stephen Jones, Assistant Treasurer, said: "Our objective is to get it to zero [people held offshore] over the course of this year."

This Bill was specifically designed and limited to certain issues to ensure it fits within the Labor Government's immigration policies.

Amnesty International Bendigo Group commends this Bill.

Yours sincerely

Jan Govett

Jan Govett, Convener, Amnesty International Bendigo Group