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To: Joint Standing Committee on Migration
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2611

RE: Ending Indefinite and Arbitrary Immigration Detention Bill 2021

Thank you for the opportunity to contribute my views to the Committee about this Bill. I write as someone who has worked as a university chaplain on three regional campuses where I have had significant contact with students of refugee backgrounds. I have seen their gratitude for being able to live in Australia and their commitment to giving back to the country that has welcomed them. I have also seen how contact between them and young Australian students has led to the commitment of the Australians to make a difference to our country. It therefore distresses me and angers me that we no longer make people like them welcome in our country.

I believe this Bill is necessary to address the failures of policy and practice in immigration detention which have been occurring over the last decade, under both Coalition and Labor governments. The recent publicity surrounding the Novak Djokovic case has made the problems with our refugee policy particularly obvious. The indefinite and arbitrary nature of the current immigration detention regime has led to the mass 'warehousing' of people in immigration detention centres and unjust and cruel treatment of refugees and people seeking asylum.

This Bill provides for systematic, fair treatment of refugees and people seeking asylum while ensuring safe, secure and efficient border management.

It is urgently needed to rectify the failings of the current system which:

1. have inflicted suffering on thousands of men, women and children in immigration detention. The current legislation offers no alternative but to continue endlessly to deprive these people of freedom unfairly and unnecessarily. Families have been cruelly separated. Men, women and especially children have suffered severe mental and physical illness and impairment.
2. have resulted in exorbitant, disproportionate expense to taxpayers. For example, the budget for offshore detention of around 200 people over the next four years is \$4.3 *billion*. In contrast, the annual cost to allow a person to live in the community while their asylum claim is processed is only \$10,221 per person (just over \$2 *million*).

Our treatment of refugees is a current problem in urgent need of fixing. There are now around 200 people effectively in detention in PNG and Nauru, and approximately 1500 in onshore detention. Most of these people are recognised refugees, and many have no foreseeable resettlement option. Their experience of detention has so severely damaged some that they cannot be resettled in a third country or live independently. Australia has a moral obligation and international legal responsibility to offer protection to these people. However, all we offer them under the current legislation is life in detention. We need a more reasonable and fair response to this humanitarian and financial crisis. I

believe this Bill is based on sound principles and provides Australia with a practical pathway to improved refugee policy and practice. It also offers the opportunity to restore Australia's international reputation as a world leader in the treatment of refugees and people seeking asylum.

I urge the Committee to support this Bill.

Yours sincerely,



Rev Dr Judy Redman