

In the inquiry I would like you to look closely at the following areas.

- The nature of those seeking asylum - Though much of the publicity around arrivals by boat would imply to the population at large that what these people have done in coming to Australia by boat without prior approval is illegal, it is not, and mandatory detention helps to instill in the mind of the public this misconception.
- The ability of our country to give hope to those who need it - (there is a proverb that says hope deferred makes the heart sick)
- The few people who we are asked to give asylum to (both by comparison with those seeking asylum world wide and compared with our annual immigration total)
- Whether detention is because of a need to keep the community safe from those detained or to discourage others from taking advantage of this country which is **OURS BY RIGHT OF BIRTH-** or some other big headed response.

I believe that before mandatory detention of asylum seekers was instituted, our population was not unduly unsafe as a result of the boat people, and frankly don't believe that this has changed much.

Our people have compassion for those in poorer circumstances as has been shown on numerous occasions over the decades, but giving assistance without condemnation is easy when it is our decision who and when we help. However it takes a little more than compassion to be able to freely help without condemnation when the choice to be generous is made for us. I believe that the Government is in a position to lead from the top in regard to this and freely accept those who are able to make it to our shores. In doing this without condemnation may have a cost but the benefits to both our community and those needing hope will far outweigh any cost.

If there is some real reason against people arriving by boat perhaps we should have processing stations where the boats depart from and those seeking a new life who have made it thus far can be processed before departing- perhaps by Qantas instead of a 'leaky boat'. And to bypass the call of queue jumpers we could afford to increase the humanitarian intake to cover these people.

More than anything else the common mindset that refugees are a burden on our society needs to be addressed and soon. I was encouraged when the Minister for Foreign affairs reported to the Parliament on 29<sup>th</sup> September last year that the leader of Australia's aid effort to Pakistan as a result of the floods was a boat person from Vietnam. The public needs to know that the government does not think these people scum.

As a country this period of exclusionist policy against those who are in need of hope must end as soon as possible.

Philip Tann