

Submission to The Joint Select Committee on Australia's Immigration Detention Network

From Grusha Leeman

12 August 2011.

I thank you for this opportunity to share my views on our current practice of detaining asylum seekers, and seek only to ensure our great nation becomes more just and humane.

I have met some sweet yet unfortunate souls who are rotting in detention in Darwin. I thought Labor had promised to do better than the Coalition: the differences between these parties is only in their names. Basically the situation as it stands is shamefully appalling and MUST be altered immediately. It is not illegal to seek asylum and indefinite detention is torture!

Start by ending the indefinite nature of detention. Limit the time for health, security and identity checks to one month. An independent judicial review can determine if any further detention is required but should be limited to another month. Detention should be a last resort. By moving people through centres quickly the deemed need for expensive detention centres will be removed. Some funds saved from removing detention centres will help cover the staffing costs to process those neglected in the present inhumane system.

Make sure you set the children free. Children should be prioritised so that they and their families are removed from detention as promptly as practicable, i.e. a two week period should be the average. This is apparently government policy already! Well, fund its realisation!!!

Halt remote detention. I went to Baxter and could not see the point of wasting resources to put desperate people in such a desolate place. Christmas Island should be a national park not a prison. The costs of flying personnel

there makes it financially prohibitive. Similarly with the islands to the north, including Malaysia. Processing of asylum seekers needs to be where services can be located and staff can live without excessive costs, like our big cities.

Torturing people in Australia (or even in Malaysia) is not a deterrent. The push factors are so terrifying you will need to put them in irons to dent the push. Indeterminate detention in our centres is not only financially prohibitive it is further injuring these desperate people. The vast majority of asylum seekers on detention become Australians and yet our taxes pay for them to be harmed before they are accepted. Some welcome! Consequently, the costs of this alarmingly expensive system is even more when you consider the appalling losses through suicides and other tragic harms and the time taken to recover afterwards as well as the care required.

Staff processing centres with government employees who have been trained to be gentle:

1. with children,
2. with people who are traumatised, and
3. with cultural awareness.

The immense \$800 million that has been allocated to detention costs in 2011/12 would be best spent with a warm welcome, a very fast processing and excellent care and education services. I want to see a bang for my buck and that means not sending staff to far away unserviced places, and not making people sicker with indeterminate detention.

It's time to welcome our refugees again!

Regards

Grusha Leeman