

Dear Committee Secretary.

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

I write in support of the above Bill on behalf of Hunter Asylum Seeker Advocacy, a citizens' group based in Newcastle NSW.

I note the Bill will compel the Government to offer transfer to Australia to all persons subject to offshore processing still in PNG or Nauru within one month of the commencement of the Bill, and that:

- o Anyone who wants to stay in PNG and Nauru can reject this offer for evacuation.
- o All people who accept this offer will be evacuated to Australia as soon as is practicable after their acceptance of the offer.
- o They will receive appropriate medical/psychiatric assessment or treatment and be placed into community detention, and will not be held in immigration detention centres or Alternative Places of Detention.

I note this accords with the ALP National Platform, which states that Labor

- o will ensure asylum seekers who arrive by irregular means will not be punished for their mode of arrival
- o improve the medical transfer process, establish an Independent Health Advice Panel to provide medical advice and maintain ministerial discretion in all decision making
- o and seeks " to remove asylum seekers from immigration detention centres through community detention or the granting of bridging visas with work rights. People seeking asylum will have means-tested access to funded migration assistance, and to appropriate social services, including income, crisis housing healthcare, mental health, community, education and English as a Second Language support during the assessment of the claim for protection. "

I note the ALP supported the Medevac Bill and has not retracted their stance on this.

I welcome the statement by Stephen Jones, Assistant Treasurer and Minister for Financial Services, on 6 Feb 2023 said: "Our objective is to get it to zero [people held offshore] over the course of this year."

On behalf of Hunter Asylum Seeker Advocacy I recommend this Bill be passed.

Regards

Dr Niko Leka

Convenor

Hunter Asylum Seeker Advocacy