

As a member of the public I would like to share my distressing experiences with detention centres and the horrible psychological effects they have on the mental states' of the people kept within them as well as the horrible events that take place there.

I submit that keeping people in detention is dangerous to their psychological wellbeing and constitutes a form of torture.

Last year I visited Maribyrnong Detention Centre over a 6 month period as part of a support program to people seeking asylum and housed in detention centres. Many of the people who are kept there already have psychological issues and detention centres only serve to exacerbate them. My friend had previously suffered from depression and being in Maribyrnong served only to worsen both this and his anxiety.

Many people in detention centres are driven to self-harm and for those who are not self-harming, they bear witness to those who are. My friend is one witness. There are also many acts of aggression that take place in detention centres by the people there, and those whose are more weak or subdued in their personalities often bear the brunt of those who are their opposite. As well, the staff in detention centres are not adequately skilled to deal with the situations that arise therein, and complaints are not always taken seriously. For example, my friend who was kept in Maribyrnong whilst applying for asylum was assaulted on numerous occasions by another person kept there. Each time, his assailant faced no repercussions – he was not charged no even punished in any serious way. The numerous suicides that take place in detention centres are stark proof of the damaging effect they have on people, and there are even also reports of SERCO staff even going so far as to encourage suicide attempts. This happens in front of other people kept there who are seeking asylum, and, reportedly, witnesses to violent events are not offered any counselling. I have another friend who regularly visits Villawood and testifies to hearing of similar experiences there.

People should not be kept in detention. It is inhumane and indefensible.

People should be allowed to stay in the community whilst they seek asylum in Australia.

Detention centres are not cost effective, and they pose serious dangers to the people therein, not to mention the ongoing psychological treatment those people will need upon their release.