



MARIA VAMVAKINOUP MP
FEDERAL MEMBER FOR CALWELL

Committee Secretary
Parliament Standing Committee On Public Works
PO Box 6021
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

Thursday 9 February

Dear Committee Secretary,

RE: Proposed Melbourne Immigration Transit Accommodation Project

I'm writing on behalf of my community in Broadmeadows regarding the **Proposed Melbourne Immigration Transit Accommodation (MITA) Project, Broadmeadows, Victoria.**

When MITA was first proposed to be built some 12 years ago, our local community engaged in a campaign to convince the Federal Government not to build a high security detention facility in Broadmeadows. The campaign that was run by a coalition of community, council and local members - including myself - and was named 'Links not Locks'.

Our concern was very much about the nature of the then proposed high risk facility and the social impact it would have on the community given its cultural diversity, and given Broadmeadows is a place that settles large cohorts of refugees, and continues to do so today.

We were also concerned at the time that the Defence land would have been better used by the community for desperately needed amenities. In fact we lobbied the then Parliamentary Secretary for Defence Fran Bailey to seriously consider giving the land to the Broadmeadows community.

The then Howard Government eventually decided to abandon its plans to build a maximum security detention centre. Instead it opted for a smaller to be known as Melbourne Immigration Transit Accommodation Centre, one that would predominantly house visa over-stayers and would be low risk in nature. More importantly, one that was less intrusive to the community of Broadmeadows.

Our community in the ensuing years has had access to MITA through its volunteer and visitor programs. These programs have allowed us to interact with MITA and its clients in a way that is consistent to the values and expectations of our local community.

The current proposal to upgrade the facility to include a high risk compound came to our attention through a local media article '*Detainee numbers may rise*' as appeared in the Hume Leader dated Tuesday 10 January, 2017 (page 03). Learning about the intention to upgrade MITA and then realising that submissions were due within three days of this printed article, it left the community with a sense of suspicion and led them to question the bona fides of the community consultation process.



We'd like to thank the committee for the extension of time granted to our community and welcome the opportunity to make this submission.

At a community meeting I convened on Tuesday 24 January, 2017, key areas of concern were raised. They include:

- Concern about the hard risk cohort and what that may mean for the existing facility itself and its current detainees
- Dismay by community that the Federal Government has chosen this type of investment in Broadmeadows as opposed to investing in programs and infrastructure that would create much needed jobs in an area that has some of the highest youth unemployment in Australia and is known for its social-economic disadvantage
- This issue becomes even more important as we are receiving large numbers of refugees from Iraq and now from Syria and there has to date been no sufficient funds provided by the Federal Government to assist with the settlement of these new refugees.
- Given the long and successful volunteer and visitor programs, the community has serious concerns about what this proposal might mean for the access to MITA and the future of these visitation programs.
- Our community is also concerned about the social impact a high risk compound would have on the area. Our community is a proud optimistic community who has fought hard to overcome an existing perception about Broadmeadows, therefore such investment runs contrary to that effort.

We reaffirm our great disappointment that the Federal Government chooses to invest in Broadmeadows in this way, instead of investing in the creation of jobs and opportunities as well as more investment in helping our local people settle the large number of refugees coming into the area.

I look forward to your response and reiterating these points alongside my community at a public hearing.

Yours sincerely,

Maria Vamvakinou MP

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