



rarballarat@gmail.com

21 February 2023

Committee Secretary
Senate Legal and Constitutional Affairs Committee
PO Box 6100
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

SUBJECT: Migration Amendment (Evacuation to Safety) Bill 2023

We are writing to signify our wholehearted support for this Bill which will see the 60 people on Nauru and the 90 people in Papua New Guinea (PNG) given the opportunity to be evacuated safely to Australia, pending settlement in a third country.

We are archivists and artists, bus drivers and counsellors, retired nurses and teachers, clerks and postal workers, unionists and community workers and we are part of Rural Australians for Refugees, Ballarat. We seek a better deal for refugees and people seeking asylum.

Over the last 9 years some of us have made regular visits to MITA - the Melbourne Immigration Transit Accommodation in Melbourne and have spoken there with people from Nauru and PNG. In telling their stories we learnt of the reasons for their escape from their own countries and concerningly the treatment they endured on Nauru and PNG. They said they were healthy when they were sent there but the conditions and lack of medical care have led to their physical and mental decline. What was particularly hard for them to deal with was not having control over their future.

It is now 2023 and we are extremely worried about the "*critical condition*" (Asylum Seeker Resource Centre, 16 February 2023) of people left on Nauru and PNG.

They have made their situation known for a long time and in solidarity with them we support this Bill because of the immeasurable difference it will make to their lives.

We are on the Land of the Wadawurrung People

We view this Bill as the means to break the nearly 10 year imbroglio, which has seen people caught in a situation which has given them no future.

As reported by the Refugee Council of Australia (7 February 2023), people "*.. have experienced assault, harassment, rape, abuse*", *have been murdered or have died "by suicide (or) medical negligence"*. This Bill then, by bringing people to safety and addressing their health problems (Sec 199C (1)) will bring, to an end, the years of neglect and mistreatment.

The Migration Amendment (Evacuation to Safety) Bill as proposed by Senator McKim, provides people with a durable third-country solution with a state party to the United Nations' 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees or the 1967 Protocol relating to the Status of Refugees. It respects people's rights (Sec 199B); ensures medical and psychiatric treatment is provided where necessary (Sec 199B(1)(c)); and gives people agency over their own lives.

We applaud its intention and commend to Parliament the prompt passing of this Bill.

Margaret O'Donnell
Convenor, Ballarat RAR
*Cc Ms Catherine King, Federal Member for Ballarat, Minister for Infrastructure,
Transport, Regional Development and Local Government*