

Committee Secretary
Joint Standing Committee on Migration
PO Box 6021
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

21 December 2021

Dear Sir/ Madam

Re: *Ending Indefinite and Arbitrary Immigration Detention Bill 2021*

As a concerned Australian citizen, I am ashamed and aghast at how we have treated asylum seekers. The conditions that these people have endured in our detention centres have been described by those who have seen them as “cruel, inhuman and degrading”.

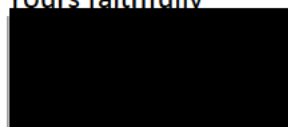
I was appalled to read that the UN High Commissioner for Refugees and staff from Médecins Sans Frontières found the rates of mental illness of asylum seekers and refugees in Nauru and PNG to be among the highest recorded in any surveyed population, and some of the worst they had ever encountered. Worse still, paediatricians reported children transferred to Nauru were among the most traumatised they had ever seen. I am pleased that the offshore processing has now been scrapped, but I am horrified it was allowed to happen in the first place.

It seems as though the Australian Government has deliberately obfuscated the situation, so it is almost impossible for the average Australian citizen to know what is really happening. As at 31 October 2021, the Department of Home Affairs reported that there were fewer than 230 people still left offshore. Yet in response to a message that I sent to the Prime Minister’s office on 31 August 2021, the Director of the Immigration and Settlement Services Group responded by stating that “there are no refugees in detention under offshore processing” as of 6 December 2021. This apparent contradiction indicates there is something wrong in the reporting process.

My greatest concern is for the remaining people in detention, whether it be in Australia or offshore, some of whom have already endured nine years of detention. I’ve read the reports of how traumatising the recent COVID-19 lockdowns have been for those in NSW and Victoria where they have had to endure more than 200 days of restricted travel. How much harder must it be for the asylum seekers who have now experienced over 3000 days of effective lockdown? I hope that no asylum seeker gets to “celebrate” a tenth year of being detained in our fair country.

I therefore am in full support of the *Ending Indefinite and Arbitrary Immigration Detention Bill 2021* as it seeks to not allow mandatory detention but prioritises the immediate needs of non-citizens, and follows international human rights law.

Yours faithfully



John James