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Committee Secretary
Joint Standing Committee on Migration
Department of House of Representatives
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BY: MIG

Dear Secretary,

INQUIRY INTO IMMIGRATION DETENTION IN AUSTRALIA

We would like to make the following submission into your inquiry into immigration detention in Australia.

In recent years, we have had some opportunity to work as volunteers assisting refugees and asylum seekers in Melbourne. We have been made aware of the desperate plight of many of these people at every stage before, during and after their arrival in Australia. Australia's immigration practices and policies have actually added to their suffering rather than alleviated it.

In the name of humanity, we respectfully ask that the Australian Government please take the following steps:

Abolish Mandatory Detention and Close the Detention Centres. There is no need (apart from rare character concerns) to imprison innocent men, women and children; this policy has caused great hardship and misery. Mandatory detention must surely rank as "world's worst practice" and we ask that it be abolished.

Grant Refugees and Asylum Seekers Full Access to Support Services. This includes health, employment, housing and welfare services, in line with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Australia currently has an underclass of people who are not entitled to the same human rights as other Australians. They are forced to rely upon charity for their very survival, rather than being allowed to contribute to our society in a meaningful and productive way.

Accept All Genuine Refugees on Humanitarian Grounds. The world remembers with horror the "Holocaust" from World War Two, with the result that a variety of Refugee Conventions arose from our collective determination that people should never again be subjected to such human rights abuse. Please honour these humanitarian principles and grant permanent residency to all refugees who have been awaiting a final determination. Please ensure that no one is forcibly returned to another country against their will – to face possible persecution or worse.

Reform the Immigration Department. Please ensure that it provides a more streamlined and humanitarian service for refugees and asylum seekers who deserve our fullest compassion and assistance. Please ensure that all cases are processed promptly and respectfully.

Support Refugee Advocacy Groups. Such groups have provided many refugees and asylum seekers with the necessities of life. Please provide sufficient funding, recognition and support to these services.

Australians hold in high esteem such values and basic human rights as freedom, justice and compassion for the underdog. Please honour these values by helping refugees and asylum seekers.

Thank you in anticipation of your efforts to help make Australia a more just and compassionate society.

Yours most respectfully,

Geoffrey, Donald and Gillian Allshorn.