



## Immigration detention from a human rights perspective

Migration Committee Chair Michael Danby has announced that the Australian Human Rights Commission (formerly HREOC) will be among the organisations appearing at a public hearing in Sydney tomorrow (24 October) as part of the inquiry into immigration detention in Australia.

Human Rights Commissioner Graeme Innes has welcomed the changes to immigration detention announced by the Minister for Immigration and Citizenship earlier this year, claiming they reflect 'a fundamental shift' in policy.

Under these reforms, people will be held in detention until health, security and identity checks have been completed.

Beyond this, mandatory detention will continue to apply to those people that present an unacceptable risk to the community and to unlawful non-citizens who have repeatedly refused to comply with their visa conditions.

In the Commission's submission to the inquiry, however, it says that, 'HREOC has not received further detail on the practical implementation of the new approach, in particular how such changes will be enforced or guaranteed'.

'We are concerned that without legislative change these intentions may not be sufficient to create a system that guarantees freedom from arbitrary detention, among other human rights'.

Chair Michael Danby acknowledged the Commission's substantial engagement in the area of human rights and detention. 'The Commission has conducted a number of investigations into immigration detention in accordance with its charter and often their recommendations have been unpalatable to government', he said.

'But these questions about improvements to the system and the best way to implement those are precisely what the Committee will be interested in discussing in Sydney', said Mr Danby.

'We look forward to hearing the views of the Human Rights Commission and others'.

Other witnesses at the hearing will include National Legal Aid, the Asylum Seekers Centre of NSW, the Asylum Seekers Resource Centre of Melbourne, GetUp and former Human Rights Commissioner Dr Sev Ozdowski, who produced HREOC's influential 2004 report on children in immigration detention.

### Details of the hearing:

Date: Friday, 24 October 2008  
Time: 9.30 am – 3.15 pm  
Location: Brown St Community Hall, 8-10 Brown St, Newtown (behind the Newtown Library)

**For media comment**, please contact the Committee Chair, Michael Danby MP, on (02) 6277 4520.

**For background information** please visit the inquiry website at

<http://www.aph.gov.au/house/committee/mig/reports.htm>

or contact the Committee Secretariat on (02) 6277 4560 or [jscm@aph.gov.au](mailto:jscm@aph.gov.au).

**Friday 24 October 2008**

**Public hearing**  
**for the inquiry into immigration detention**

**Brown Street Community Hall**  
**8-10 Brown Street**  
**Newtown, Sydney**

9.30 am	Australian Human Rights Commission
10.15 am	A Just Australia
10.45am	National Legal Aid
11.15 am	<i>Morning tea</i>
11.30 am	Dr Sev Ozdowski, University of Western Sydney
12.00 pm	NSW Service for the Treatment and Rehabilitation of Torture and Trauma Survivors (STARTTS)
12.30 pm	GetUp
1.00 pm	<i>Lunch break</i>
1.45 pm	Asylum Seekers Centre of NSW
2.15 pm	Asylum Seekers Resource Centre (Melbourne)
2.45 pm	Bridge for Asylum Seekers Foundation / Balmain for Refugees
3.15 pm	<i>Close</i>

Members of the public and media are welcome to attend the hearing.

The relevant submissions are available on the inquiry website at <http://www.aph.gov.au/house/committee/mig/detention/subs.htm>. For further information please contact the Committee secretariat.