

REFUGEE COUNCIL OF AUSTRALIA

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17 January, 2001

Mr Bill Morris
Inquiry Secretary
Joint Standing Committee on Treaties
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

Submission No.37.....



Dear Mr Morris,

Re: International Criminal Court

The Refugee Council of Australia has been watching with interest the progress towards the establishment of the International Criminal Court.

Refugees are, by definition, victims of persecution. Thus far, most perpetrators of this persecution have not been held accountable for their actions. They remain in power or live out their retirement closeted in the safety of their country or a friendly state. Meanwhile, abuse continues unchecked in so many parts of the world, forcing people to flee across borders to seek protection elsewhere.

While the International Criminal Court will not, of itself, prevent persecution from occurring nor the need for people to flee, it is the Council's view that it will make a significant and valuable contribution. If the prospect of being held accountable for human rights abuses makes potential perpetrators think twice, it will have its place. So too will the trials of abusers play an integral role in the healing process for both individuals and communities.

The Refugee Council does not wish to make a detailed submission to the current inquiry, deferring to the respected human rights advocates who have done so. We do, however, want to place on the record our strong support for the Australian Government moving expeditiously towards ratification of the statute.

Yours sincerely,

Margaret Piper
Executive Director.