



From detention centres to the community: What are the alternatives?

The International Detention Coalition, who will give evidence to the Migration Committee in Melbourne on Thursday (22 January), has urged the Committee to consider alternatives to immigration detention, such as supervised release, regular reporting requirements or posting bail.

“If there are no health, character or public interest concerns, then bridging visa release options with community-based holistic care should be made available as the priority option”, says the Coalition in its submission to the inquiry into immigration detention in Australia, arguing that this would be more humane and in line with international law.

The Coalition also recommends that some existing facilities be converted to European-style open accommodation centres from which people could come and go.

After tabling its first inquiry report in December, the Committee is now considering community-based alternatives to immigration detention.

“We will be looking at the options currently available in Australia, how they are working, what other countries are doing, and whether there are other things that could work in the Australian context”, said Chair Michael Danby.

“We will also be looking at the relative cost-effectiveness of alternatives, knowing as we do that immigration detention costs the Australian taxpayer a lot of money – some \$220 million in 2006-07.”

The following day (Friday 23 January), the Committee will hear from local service providers and community groups in Brisbane. In particular, a roundtable of local organisations will discuss housing issues for immigration clients in the Brisbane community.

“We have already taken evidence that there are significant housing issues for people released from immigration detention into the community, or placed on bridging visas as an alternative to immigration detention,” said Mr Danby.

“If we are thinking about putting an increased number of people in the community after brief periods in immigration detention then the Committee is interested to learn about the ramifications of this for clients and for local groups providing assistance.”

Program is attached below.

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.

JOINT STANDING COMMITTEE ON MIGRATION

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PROGRAM

Thursday 22 January 2009

**East Melbourne Library and Community Centre
122 George Street
East Melbourne**

2.00 pm	International Detention Coalition
2.45 pm	<i>Afternoon tea</i>
3.00 pm	Roundtable with bridging visa clients <i>For client privacy reasons this roundtable is closed to the public and the media, however, a transcript will be made available on the Committee website within seven working days.</i>
4.30 pm	<i>Close</i>

Friday 23 January 2009

**Queensland Parliament House
Corner George and Alice Sts
Dundair Room
Brisbane**

9.30 am	Refugee Claimants Support Centre
10.05 am	Romero Centre
10.40 am	<i>Morning tea</i>
11.00 am	Housing roundtable with ASHRAM members - Agencies Supporting Housing for Refugees, Asylum Seekers and Migrants
12.30 pm	<i>Close</i>

Aside from the second session in Melbourne, members of the public and media are welcome to attend the hearings.