



Montmorency Asylum Seekers Support Group

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**The Parliament of Australia
Joint Standing Committee on Migration
Inquiry into Immigration Detention in Australia**

To the Secretary

From Montmorency Asylum Seekers Support Group

The Montmorency Asylum Seekers Support Group is a diverse group of concerned citizens. We include different political persuasions, a number of church organisations and various interest groups. We have met monthly during the last three years and have provided support to Asylum Seekers.

The ethical position of the group, and the issue which brings us together, is a rejection of the current policy of Mandatory Indefinite Detention of Asylum Seekers.

We urge you to give the following concerns your consideration during the Review to be conducted by your Department.

- The policy of Indefinite Mandatory Detention should be discontinued. After initial screening to satisfy health and security requirements, Asylum Seekers should be released into the community to await the processing of their application for asylum. The adverse effects of Indefinite Mandatory Detention have been well documented.
- Asylum Seekers should not be issued with a Detention Debt on release. We understand that this debt is usually waived but we believe that the debt must be cancelled so that it cannot be as a threat in any future circumstance.
- Reception Centres should be established in the style of hostels to be operated by the government for the initial screening of Asylum Seekers. Such Centres should be not be operated by private contractors, so that the need to profit from the needs of the Asylum Seekers does not result in shoddy treatment. The Centres might be managed by philanthropic and/or community organisations providing they are adequately funded by the Government.

- Asylum Seekers should be held in Australia during initial screening. Off-shore Centres are more costly to operate but more importantly, they make access to counselling and legal advice difficult and expensive for detainees. The Centre at Christmas Island should be closed.
- On receipt of a Permanent Protection Visa or a Bridging Visa, Asylum Seekers should have access to all rights as documented by the United Nations Human Rights Commission, including health care, income support and work rights.

As a member of the international community embodied in the United Nations, Australia has an obligation to provide protection to Asylum Seekers who should not be punished for seeking sanctuary in Australia from persecution and/or war in their country of origin.

We look forward to the creation of a Bill of Rights and hope that its provisions will protect the rights of all residents in our country whether they have acquired citizenship or not

We look forward to an early resolution of the injustice which currently prevails in our treatment of Asylum Seekers so that they are able to look forward to a future where they can make a contribution to the country of their adoption.

Prepared on Behalf of the Montmorency Asylum Seekers Support Group by

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