

Submission to the Joint Standing Committee

Submission No.	30
Date Received	11/11/81

I am 81 years

My name is ...
old, a retired secondary teacher residing at

I am a migrant from Sri Lanka. I came to Australia in 1947 and have been an Australian citizen since 1948.

I visited detainees at Maribyrnong Detention Center in Victoria for about 3 years. I came to know some of the detainees well and had experience of contact with several guards and officers in the immigration department. I submit that long periods of detention are inhumane and do a great deal of emotional damage to people who are already frightened, damaged and traumatised.

As far as the guards I dealt with were concerned they acted as if the detainees were criminals and those visiting were a nuisance and had to be discouraged, and harassed as much as possible. I only met one individual who treated us as fellow human beings.

The way Cornelia Rau and Vivien Sabu were treated, ineffectively, negligently, unjustly and even in a deliberately cruel manner is a good example.

One young detainee who had lost most of his clothes and possessions and was very depressed had 2 new tee shirts I gave him stolen. As I had complied with all the rules and had receipts to prove what I had done I complained on his behalf and was told

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I was lying. He was eventually after a great deal of fun offered 2 shabby second hand tee shirts.

At the Christmas Party put on by the visitors for the detainees all of whom were invited. Without warning at the last minute only the Christians were permitted to attend. A guard stood with a list at the door and turned the Non-Christians away.

A sick 40 year old woman one week before she was released on a bridging visa was dragged out of her bed at night in fear that she was being deported and removed to Baxter. In her night clothes and leaving her clothes and possessions behind. Visitors had to arrange for them to be sent to her.

When she was released from Baxter she was put outside the gates and told to find her own way. Friends had supplied her ticket to return to Melbourne and a passing motorist noticed her distress ~~at~~ at being left stranded and helped her.

A young man whose first name was Christian was not believed when he said he was a Christian. He was treated with such suspicion and hostility that he became depressed and refused to eat. He had to have 3 months psychiatric treatment.

A woman with a new baby a month old was sent suddenly to Baxter leaving behind not only her own clothes but the baby clothes we had given her and they had to be sent to her.

These are just a few examples and after long periods of harsh unnecessary detention are now finally accepted as refugees and are living in the community. Some of course had already been accepted as refugees by the U.N.

long periods of detention especially when guarded by people who have been trained to deal with criminals in both cruel and unnecessary,

Health and security checks should be done as quickly as possible and Asylum Seekers released into the community with rights such as work, benefits and healthcare.

The Labor Government is to be commended for what it has done but a lot more needs to be done Christmas Island should not be used isolating them from visitors, advocates and lawyers.

As an Australian citizen I do not appreciate the way I was personally treated. For example I have knee and shoulder replacements which react to the electronic detector. I was not believed even with a doctors certificate without unnecessary pain.

I submit that the system as it existed under the Howard Government was bad and should be radically changed and reformed. There should be adequate appeal and supervision of guards and officers and perhaps additional training.

RECEIVED
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BY: mlg