

## **SUBMISSION TO**

**Inquiry into the Administration and Operation of the Migration Act  
1958**

**from**

**Mary Dagmar Davies Founder and Administrator JANNAH THE  
SIEVX MEMORIAL [www.sievxmemorial.org](http://www.sievxmemorial.org)**

**Dear Senators,**

**On October 19, 2001 an un-named fishing boat carrying over 400  
refugees bound for Australia sunk. 353 people just like us, 146  
children, 142 women & 65 men, died under the Southern Cross. This is  
now known as the tragedy of SIEVX. SIEVX is entirely about people,  
people just like us. There should be a full investigation and the names  
of the dead should be released. They deserve our respect, kindness and  
understanding. But we are so fortunate, maybe we can only  
understand if we can place their terrible suffering into a context which  
is familiar.**

### **SIEVX AND THE TENNIS COURT**

**Most of us watch tennis - At 19.5 meters long SIEVX was four meters shorter  
than a tennis court and less than half it's width (tennis court 23.774 m x 10.973  
m). A tennis court looks full when men's doubles are in progress. Over 400  
people were forced at gun point onto tiny boat. So many people, so many  
families. Over 400 human beings were put to sea on a tiny, leaky wooden boat  
that could have been dry docked on a tennis court on one side of the centre line  
with room to spare. We travel and would know the population of many small  
towns, and villages in many parts of the world is less than 400. The population of  
Lord Howe Island an idyllic holiday island of the Australian coast was recorded  
as 300 in 2002.**

### **SIEVX AND DOUGLAS WOOD**

**It is estimated that Douglas Wood received a boatload of money, between  
\$A250,000 and \$A400,000, for his interview on the Ten Network. There is  
nothing wrong with that but how different it is the people of SIEVX. The  
mainstream media willingly pay when their stories are told by contributing  
writers and there is nothing wrong with that. But the people of SIEVX Amal  
Basry, the other survivors and the next of kin get zero, zip, nada, nothing and it  
is their story they endured the suffering they were there.**

### **SIEVX SMUGGLER AND ONE DETAINEE**

Australia's longest serving detainee has only just been released after being locked up for seven years for doing absolutely nothing that could be construed as a criminal activity. SIEVX smuggler ABU QUASSEY got just seven years for sending 353 people to their deaths in an unseaworthy holed boat that is less than. Seven years for the death of 353 people who believed in Australia and wanted to be Australians and were on their way to join family waiting in Australia when Australia closed her borders.

The Howard Government believed the survivors of the SIEVX tragedy would take comfort in the sentence and the fine imposed of \$A111.00. The statement from Immigration Minister Vanstone made it apparent that the Howard Government was content to set the monetary value of a human life at 31 cents.

353 valuable human lives rounding down at the checkout of the human supermarket this is the docket from the cash register:-

146 CHILDREN total value \$A45.25

142 WOMEN total value \$A44.00

65 MEN total value \$A20.00

At the time of the Vanstone statement ironically the Howard Government and the Latham Opposition occupied 146 seats in the House of Representatives which equals the number of children who perished in the SIEVX tragedy.

#### **SIEVX AND CITIZENSHIP**

The survivors who went to other countries were granted immediate citizenship. Survivors in Australia had to wait nearly three and a half years in fearful limbo before being granted permanent residency. Many of the next of kin who have lost their entire families continue to wait in fright.

#### **SIEVX AND THE TITANIC**

We still talk of the Titanic over one hundred years after the sinking and in the year 2105 no doubt people around the world will still speak of SIEVX. Because who can forget the 146 children, 142 women and 65 men who died under the Southern Cross.

The 353 death toll of SIEVX was just over a quarter of that of Titanic in which 1595 perished. 535 Titanic passengers were saved and 210 crew. The overall length of Titanic was 269 meters her beam measured 28 meters she stretched the length of four city blocks. *Repeat At 19.5 meters long SIEV X was four meters shorter than a tennis court and less than half it's width (tennis court 23.774 m x 10.973 m).*

In the days after the sinking of the Titanic almost 200 bodies were retrieved from the Atlantic. On October 30 2001, Claire Harvey reported in the Australian "Indonesian authorities have recovered most of the 353 people who drowned on October 19 when an overcrowded boat carrying 397 asylum-seekers bound for Australia sank off Java."

<http://sievx.com//articles/disaster/20011030ClaireHarvey.html>

In her article 'The 45th Survivor' <http://sievx.com/archives/2005/20050614.shtml> writer and historian Marg Hutton asked this question. "If it is true that the lone survivor arrived back in Jakarta aboard a vessel that also picked up several dead bodies - what happened to them? Who were they? Where are they buried?"

Bereaved family members in Australia were not permitted to go to Indonesia to identify their loved ones or give comfort to wives or children who survived. The survivors of SIEVX and next of kin deserve to know the final resting place of those who perished and their names must be released so we may honour their memory. The bereaved of Titanic were far better served.

Titanic sank on April 15, 1912 and Britain and America immediately conducted investigations. U.S. Senate Committee on the Titanic Disaster Issued Final Report to Congress on May 28, 1912 and the British Board of Inquiry published Titanic Investigation Findings on July 30, 1912. Four years after the sinking of SIEVX there is still no inquiry. Indeed there has not even been so much as an inquest.

#### **SIEVX AND SEPTEMBER 11, 2001**

The death toll of SIEVX is just over a ninth of that in Washington and New York on that terrible day that changed the world. There was quite properly an outpouring of grief throughout the world for September 11. But in the months following the sinking of SIEVX a deadly, ignoble silence fell as the Howard Government and Beazley Opposition in the middle of an election campaign distanced themselves from the event.

#### **SIEVX AND THE TSUNAMI - SIEVX AND BALI**

Terrible tragedies but how different the reaction of the people of Australia, the media of Australia and the Government of Australia. Why was there so much less concern for the people of SIEVX.

#### **SIEVX AN AUSTRALIAN TRAGEDY**

SIEVX is indeed an Australian tragedy. Because the way we have treated the people of SIEVX represents all that is wrong with the Australian psyche and the body politic. Our pretense of decency, generosity, fairness and democracy unravels at the mention of SIEVX.

**However, it is wrong to assume Australians do not care about the people of SIEVX or honour those who died. You only have to visit JANNAH THE SIEVX MEMORIAL [www.sievxmemorial.org](http://www.sievxmemorial.org) and read the condolence messages to see how much Australians and people from all round the world care.**

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Dead Children Like Birds Floating on the Water - SIEVX an Australian Tragedy

By Mary Dagmar Davies

Jul 14, 2004, 10:34

A baby burst from the womb of a drowning mother. The baby gasped for life and swallowed death in an angry toxic sea phosphorescent with oil. That un-named baby was a victim of the

SIEVX tragedy but was not included among the 146 children who also perished. No one would have know of that little souls brief existance if a survivor had not seen "... a baby with its umbilical cord still attached to the mother was amongst those who drowned".

There were 45 eyewitnesses to the tragedy of SIEVX which has be described as the 'Titanic of the Poor'. Just 45 survivors from over 400 people who were forced at gun point onto tiny boat. So many people, so many families. Over 400 human beings put to sea on a tiny, leaky wooden boat that could have been dry docked on a tennis court on one side of the centre line with room to spare. *(At 19.5 meters long SIEVX was four meters shorter than a tennis court and less than half it's width. A standard tennis court measures 23.774 m x 10.973 m.)*

On the 19th of October 2001, that tiny fishing boat bound for Australia, sank in international waters within the Australian surveillance zone and 353 - 146 children, 142 women and 65 men - died in the tragedy of SIEVX the death toll of was approximately a twelfth of that in the tragic events of 9/11. They had fled the oppression of the Taliban, Al Qaida, and other terrorist groups Many had suffered under the rule of Saddam Hussein. When Australia closed her borders that tiny doomed boat, which would later be known as SIEVX, was their last and only hope.

The 45 survivors of SIEVX experienced the horror of the sinking and suffered over twenty hours in the water, among the dead and waiting for death, before being rescued by Indonesian fishermen. But this was not the end to their agony. The Howard Government allowed only 7 survivors into Australia to join their remaining family members after many torturous months. While the Australian Howard Government quite correctly acknowledges the horrors of 9/11, Bali and the London bombings they continue to ignore SIEVX which sunk in Australia's border protection surveillance zone. Calls for a full judicial inquiry go unnoticed. And requests for the names of those who died are summarily refused.

The Survivors Accounts <http://sievxmemorial.org/accounts.htm> are harrowing and have been available to the media since the latter months of 2001 but they have not been published.

Amal Basry survivor of SIEVX and now a Patron of JANNAH THE SIEVX MEMORIAL said "Because I was waiting for my death, I saw everything. I was like a camera. I remembered being told as a child that bodies float and there was this dead woman. I held on to her and she supported me all night, she saved my life. I want people to know why I stayed on the boat even when I saw it was very dangerous. I want people to know who I am. Why I escaped from Iraq. Why I risked my life. Why I wanted to come to Australia. Maybe then they will understand."

When Amal Basry was first interviewed after her rescue she said she wanted to learn to speak English very well and then go on Larry King and tell the world what happened. She is a brave and strong woman but when she speaks of the children she cries "... I opened my eyes and found myself under the boat. I see many children die quickly, quickly."

Historian Marg Hutton webowner of the respected archive SIEVX.com <http://sievx.com/> has painstaking pieced together the available details photographs of the survivors together and has generously given permission for these quotes from the survivors to be linked to the SIEVX.com Survivors Speak articles.

"Wherever you look you see the dead children like birds floating on the water. Those who survived 22 hours in the water saw the dead bodies of women and children with cuts from nails on the boat and with scars from where the fish were biting at them in the water and saw blood. In the end a boat came to rescue us. The ones who died have found comfort. As for us, our lives have been destroyed." ~ AHMED HUSSEIN  
[Survivors Speak: Ahmed Hussein \(/archives/2003\\_07-08/20030705.shtml\)](http://archives/2003_07-08/20030705.shtml)

"My wife and daughters were looking at me and crying as the boat capsized. I lost three children and my wife, but the 150 children are like my own too. Those who perished with their families have found relieve, but as for us, we are mere empty shells, our souls went with

them. Every time I saw a child I could not differentiate between it and my children. Anywhere I placed my arm, a drowned child or woman would emerge and lift my arm and the surviving women would cry more. My wife and children stayed under the boat - they never came out."  
~ HASSAN JASSEM

[Survivors Speak: Hassan Jassem](/archives/2003_07-08/20030707.shtml) (/archives/2003\_07-08/20030707.shtml)

".... the 150 children kept floating up looking for air to breathe inside their cabin - more water went in and they were drowned. We were a group of 28 doctors from Khuzistan. We lived in Iran for 11 years, only 5 remained. There were some children and some women amongst the group." ~ Dr HAYDAR

[Survivors Speak: Dr Haydar from Khuzistan](/archives/2003_07-08/20030703.shtml) (/archives/2003\_07-08/20030703.shtml)

"I boarded the boat with my wife and four children and also my brother, brother's wife and two children. One of my children survived, my wife, my brother and family all drowned. My brother screamed out to be rescued but I could not help him. He was too far from the children. One of my other children kept crying for water until the morning when he died of thirst. I kept two of my children on my shoulders all night. It was raining heavily, I did not know where my wife was. One of the children died in the morning from thirst ... " ~ FAWZI QASIM

[Survivors Speak: Fawzi & Amar](/archives/2003_09-10/20030911.shtml) (/archives/2003\_09-10/20030911.shtml)

"I then saw a man by the name of Yasser Elhelou, he lost his entire family. I called out to him but he could not help me. I saw another man wearing a lifejacket, I asked him to help me find my daughter. As he turned I realised that it was my husband. I told him that my daughters were taken under. He said 'Maybe someone has rescued them.' He was able to grab a floating plank of timber for me. We went on the plank for a while. I said that I am in despair for my daughters. He said maybe someone has rescued them. Then I saw my small daughter Alya floating, eyes open, dead. Her father embraced her and started calling her name; he kissed her and hugged her. I said 'God has taken her'. He said 'Come see her'. I said 'I cannot look at her'. He left her, then a little later we saw the body of my elder daughter with the body of the woman who was responsible for her going under water. The other woman's two daughters, twelve and eleven, were also floating by her, both dead; my daughter was on top of her head. My husband said 'This is my daughter Kawthar.' Her father tried to revive her, he called out to her and then started to choke in pain and sorrow. He looked quite strong until he saw his daughters and he started choking. He said 'I have lost my family. I have brought you to this, I do not deserve to live.' He said 'I cannot stay, I do not want to see you die in front of me.' As he was talking he was looking very tired. He was crying and his grip became loose because of exhaustion. Then a wave came and washed him away from the timber." ~ ROKAYA SATAR

[Survivors Speak: Rokaya Satar](/archives/2003_07-08/20030704.shtml) (/archives/2003\_07-08/20030704.shtml)

"I saw a child I thought was asleep on the water but I found him to be dead. We saw many different tragedies - the floating dead bodies, those crying for their brothers, fathers, wives, children, etc. It was unimaginable. I cannot continue, excuse me." ~ ABU MUSLIM

[Survivors Speak: Abu Muslim](/archives/2003_07-08/20030708.shtml) (/archives/2003\_07-08/20030708.shtml)

Sadiq Raza, held his young two year old daughter Kauthar on his shoulders in the water for twenty hours to save her life. Heroic feats of endurance like this were also performed by other survivors who desperately tried to keep their young children alive until they were rescued, but sadly Kauthar Sadiq was the only small child to survive.

"There were a number of us holding onto a plank of timber. As time went on in the water, one would say, 'I cannot hold on - please forgive me. Please pass my greetings to so and so' and they would lose their grip and get washed away. This happened to one after the other... I cannot speak about what I witnessed, please let me be excused. [His daughter Kauthar cries out for her mother.] ~ SADIQ RAZA & KAUTHAR

[Survivors Speak: Sadiq & Kauthar](/archives/2003_07-08/20030709.shtml) (/archives/2003\_07-08/20030709.shtml)

Zaynab Alrimahi found it hard to speak. Zaynab Alrimahi was one of only five children to survive the sinking of SIEVX and the only one to lose her entire family in the tragedy. Zaynab was travelling with her parents Souad and Ahsan, two brothers, Mahmoud (6) and Moustafa (4), and two sisters, Fatima (14) and Roukaya (7) both Zaynab's Iraqi parents and all four of her siblings drowned. Zaynab survived the sinking with the help of Husam, the teenage son of Issam and Rajaa Al Haddad.

"The last words Zaynab Alrimahi heard her mother utter were a prayer." Kelly Burke reported in *The Age*, 21 December 2001. "Souad Alrimahi implored Allah to keep her five children safe as she put lifejackets on them and led her family to the top deck of the sinking vessel. Within seconds, the boat carrying more than 400 asylum seekers capsized in rough seas off the south-west coast of Java.

"Zaynab's starkest memory was the sight of her six-year-old brother Mahmoud clinging to a plank as he choked to death on a deadly cocktail of seawater and fuel.

[Survivors Speak: Zaynab Alrimahi](/archives/2003_07-08/20030710.shtml) (/archives/2003\_07-08/20030710.shtml)

<http://www.axisoflogic.com/cgi-bin/exec/view.pl?archive=64&num=9964&printer=1>

"In this room full of grief-stricken men and women there is only one small child, two year old Kauthar Sadiq. She survived the sinking and miraculously made it through that long and horrible night atop her father's shoulders. In the video, she is wearing pink, and moving around as little children do, demanding attention, seemingly unaware of the horrific ordeal that she has endured while all around her other survivors are struck dumb and practically motionless in their grief. To look at this small child is to realise that there were another 140 children who did not survive. To really digest the horror of this, read the survivor accounts and where the death of a child is described try substituting the name of your own child and imagine what the suffering was like. 146 children, 142 women, 65 men died. Yes we need to know their names". *Extract "We Need To Know Their Names" by Marg Hutton*  
[http://sievx.com/archives/2002\\_10-11/20021031.shtml](http://sievx.com/archives/2002_10-11/20021031.shtml)

**I thank you for reading this material and hope you can help the people of SIEVX.**

**If you wish me to provide further information you may contact me**

**Mary Dagmar Davies,  
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