

To whom it may concern

Whilst I do not have any first hand experience of our current immigration detention policies due to fortunately being born in this country, it disgusts me that the government of my country treats new arrivals so inhumanely!!

My grandparents were Italian immigrants, with my grandfather being investigated as an 'alien' in the 1940's as he was not yet an Australian citizen and obviously at that stage, people of Italian descent were treated suspiciously. As his wife had been naturalized with the rest of her family after arriving from Italy around 1912, and he had numerous referees from the local area of his contribution to the local area and commitment to the values of Australia, he was not removed from his family.

He then went on to purchase our family farm where he bred and milked cows in the South West of Western Australia for the next 30 years, also raising his family and contributing to the economic and social development of the area.

I am proud of both my European heritage and the fact that I am an Australian citizen however it amazes me how many Australians fail to realise that we were ALL immigrants at one stage or another!

While appreciating that we need to be aware of people's backgrounds for security reasons, I don't understand how we can fail to recognise that the process of locking people away in remote locations under stressful conditions for long periods of time contributes to them having problems integrating into society!

I am also disgusted that we keep children, or did until this week, in detention for extended periods. The argument that they need to be kept with their families is fair, however the fact that we have children being born and growing up in these centres for extended periods should indicate that locking whole families away is inhumane and to our detriment.

Mr Ruddock, ex-Immigration Minister, referred to the returning of an 8 month pregnant Chinese woman to China, who then had her child aborted, as 'humane'. Most people would consider this completely inhumane and would rightly be disgusted.

Numerous asylum seekers have been sent back to 'safe' countries like Afghanistan and Iraq - how can we decide these are safe for people to be returned to when we are still engaged in military actions there?!

Australian citizens have been deported and/or locked away when they are clearly mentally unstable and officials have attempted to cover it up to save face.

I have worked with immigrants from Kosovo and other muslim countries who have been fantastic sources of information that have made me further appreciate how lucky I am to have been born here but also has enhanced my understanding of why people are willing to take such risks to gain access to similar opportunities.

I can fully understand how the actions above, and many others the Immigration Department has taken, provoke some people to react badly, particularly when the horror stories are relayed to family overseas and then passed around with the embellishments that normally accompany stories.

We hear all sorts of rhetoric regarding the 'war on terror' about winning the 'hearts and minds' of people at the same time as we are telling people from that region that we don't think they have a claim to asylum is ridiculous and contributes to misguided views that we are happy to intervene in their affairs militarily but provide little support to those wanting a chance to start over.

The majority of people who immigrate to this country looking for a new beginning are willing and able to contribute to the future economic and social development of Australia, and we should be helping them to do so rather than many of our current policies which are inhumane, discriminatory and a source of embarrassment to many citizens like myself.

Regards

Brooke Eddington