

I have been concerned for a long time about the process of mandatory detention for those arriving without or overstaying a visa. I believe it is inhumane and unethical to lock people up without a conviction for a criminal offence. This especially applies to children, who should only be locked up as an absolute last resort and certainly not under the circumstances of illegally entering a country. I have also heard that those in mandatory detention may be liable for costs incurred while they are imprisoned, which seems to me like rubbing salt in the wound. We do not ask criminals in domestic prison to pay for their incarceration, so why do so for people who are seeking asylum, those who are possibly the most vulnerable group in the world? While I do not agree with any kind of immigration control, if it is to occur, I believe that asylum seekers can be housed in the community while awaiting processing. This is humane, in accordance with international law and of lesser cost to these people and Australian society as a whole.

Criminals are innocent until proven guilty. The very least we can do is provide the same courtesy to those alighting on our shores.

- Katherine Raymond
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