

I wish to make a submission in regards to the policy of mandatory detention of asylum seekers in Australia.

I believe that mandatory detention should be abolished immediately, and all asylum seekers released into the community whilst they await the outcome of their application for asylum.

The mandatory detention of asylum seekers is unconscionable, expensive and fails to act as a deterrent.

Asylum seekers have stopped arriving in Australia because the situation in Iraq and Afghanistan have changed, and because of the disruption program the Australian Federal Police ran in Indonesia to stop boats leaving for Australia. The sinking of Siev X deserves closer investigation and should be looked at as part of a royal commission into the Australian government's treatment of asylum seekers. Mr Ian Causley MP stated in an email to me that "An interesting fact to note that to date in 2004/05 out of approximately 1,700 children who were located through Immigration Compliance activities over 55% of them were in immigration detention for less than one week to two weeks." I would like the Senate Inquiry to investigate why it was necessary for 1700 children to be detained in this period, and how many were wrongfully detained.

I believe the locking up of women and children and making their release into residential detention dependent upon their separation from the male parent is abhorrent. It would be far more humane to house people in community facilities until their application. People are languishing in detention centres, often with fewer rights than convicted criminals.

The conduct of guards at detention facilities in Australia needs to be examined, as media reports of the detention of Cornelia Rau show there is little regard for the welfare of detainees.

Why are detention centres placed in remote and inaccessible places?

Why are people denied access to legal representation?

Why are so many DIMIA decisions found to be wrong on appeal?

Why are people in offshore detention denied access to the Australian legal system while Australia pays to feed and house them?

Why are people becoming mentally ill as a result of being in detention?

Why are Australian residents and citizens being wrongfully detained and deported?

The detention of asylum seekers is arbitrary and is therefore illegal under Australia's international obligations. The policy of detention of asylum seekers should be thrown overboard!

We need a Royal Commission into all aspects of the treatment of asylum seekers. Australia needs to know the truth, to understand how the abuse of human rights by DIMIA is so routine.

Australia's treatment of Asylum Seekers is appalling, and their abuse is arbitrary, as shown by the illegal detention of Australian citizens and residents. I urge you to fight to stop the appalling treatment of asylum seekers. Please help to end this abuse of human rights, now.

Bernadette McKenna