

Sally Putnam  
285 Gorge Road,  
Athelstone, 5076  
South Australia

To the Senate Commission

I would like to register my deep concern at the Government's moves to transfer all refugee processing offshore. As an Australian citizen, I am disturbed that this legislation contravenes the basic human right of all people to seek asylum. As a teacher, I am horrified by the fact that we are locking children up. Having worked with children who have come out of Woomera, I know the deep reaching effects on them that this imprisonment has. Once you have watched and listened to a ten year old Afghani boy organise a group of his peers into their places in an 'imaginary' boat in a drama lesson and then tell you casually that when he put his hand over the side, the water was this close and one night there was a storm and they all thought the boat was going to sink, you can never think about refugees as a group again. Instead, I can only see people like me and my family! I would do anything to keep my family safe! I am fortunate that I live in a country that does not persecute me and therefore I have not had to make some of the desperate choices that other parents have had to make. There but for the Grace of God go we all!

Does this new legislation not go against what we could describe as the underlying Australian values of fairness and equal opportunity for all? What are we afraid of? This latest group of asylum seekers from West Papua have well documented evidence of persecution. Why do we have to add to the sum of their misery instead of behaving in a humane and caring way? In life I generally find that if you treat people well they respond in a similar manner, but if you provide grounds for resentment through your treatment of them, this breeds mistrust and bitterness.

I would like to add my support to the submission made by the Refugee Council of Australia. Please do not add to the growing sense of paranoia that there is in this country and the world generally with this legislation. I ask you to act with generosity and humanity.

Yours Sincerely  
Sally Putnam