

SUBMISSION INTO THE INQUIRY INTO THE PROVISIONS OF THE  
MIGRATION AMENDMENT (DESIGNATION UNAUTHORISED  
ARRIVALS) BILL 2006

Senators,

This legislation, it seems to me, flies in the face of Article 14 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights “Everyone has the right to seek and enjoy in other countries freedom from persecution”. Furthermore, there is an international obligation on state signatories to the 1951 Refugee Convention to provide protection to asylum seekers found to be refugees irrespective of how they enter a country.

It seems doubly poignant to me that this, a supposedly Christian country, does not welcome fleeing Christian refugees from other (not all of them Muslim) countries. Or not always. (I think of a young Indonesian currently detained in Baxter and on the point of being deported where he will face persecution and worse because he is a devout Christian)

As a regular visitor to Villawood Detention Centre, I have seen over the years the steady deterioration in health both mental and physical of the detainees there incarcerated. How much worse a situation will be faced by those similarly detained offshore, with no access to friends or help of any sort, but, conveniently, out of sight of the media. And all this, it seems, to be put into operation solely for the purpose of placating our powerful neighbour, Indonesia.

I visited Port Arthur for the first time earlier this year and was struck by learning that when the convict settlement there was closed in the late 1800s, a sizeable group of convicts remained who were too mentally ill as a consequence of their long imprisonment to be set free into the community. They were instead confined in a converted prison building, from then on deemed to be a lunatic asylum. Is this what is awaiting our detainees? Together with huge compensation, perhaps, like the \$400,000 awarded to Shayan Badraie. Even if it were humane, this seems a daft way to run the system.

Submitted by Mary J de Merindol, Paddington, NSW