



Australia's treatment of Refugees and Asylum Seekers

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The Hon Scott Morrison, MP
Minister for Immigration & Border Protection
The House of Representatives, Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

29 June 2014

CC: The Hon Tony Abbott, MP, Prime Minister
The Hon Richard Marles, MP, Shadow Minister for Immigration & Border Protection
The Hon Wayne Swann, MP, Member for Lilley

Dear Minister,

Initially, can I thank you for the work you do on behalf of the Australian people. What you do is often thankless, and many of the sacrifices you make for the people who elect you and whom you serve are unseen. In particular the area you represent which is both complex & emotive. But I write also to voice my concern for Australia's treatment of refugees and asylum seekers. In particular I am concerned about the following:

Firstly, our treatment of those who flee persecution seeking the same safety & security I am afforded living in this country. While understanding the need to provide safety to the people who reside in Australia, I call on you to reconsider revisiting the threshold by which you allow people to apply for asylum from 10% to 50% in your Migration Amendment (Protection and Other Measures) Bill 2014. I call on you, as a citizen of the country you are seeking to protect, to show compassion to those fleeing hardship and persecution.

Secondly, the indefinite mandatory detention of those who have sought asylum in Australia. Your own statistics as of 31 May 2014 indicate that 3,578 are held in immigration detention centres offshore. This figures include 630 children. For a country that champions freedom, fairness and compassion, holding innocent people who are fleeing from hardship for an indefinite period of time - particularly children - is not only a violation of human rights (according to UNHCR), but a contradiction of what our country is founded on. I call on you to end mandatory detention, reunite families, and allow those held to begin anew their lives.

Thirdly, the lack of transparency in our care and responsibility for refugees and asylum seekers. In no form of government, at no point in history, has secrecy from those who rule ended well. While I understand not all details all of the time can be disclosed, the claim of "operational security" that allows for the secrecy surrounding refugees & asylum seekers is unacceptable. The basis of our democracy is accountability and transparency. I call on you to fulfil your responsibility to the Australian people.

My hope in writing this letter is that this country, in the way we deal with those who come here, would be characterised primary by compassion, rather than pragmatics, policy or policing.

Sincerely,

Derek Hanna