

## The Pacific Solution is no Solution

Imagine having to flee your home, your country, and everything you know, in favour of a life of uncertainty. Imagine travelling for weeks in a cramped leaky fishing boat, with little food or water, and without ever seeing land. Imagine yourself confined behind razor wire, twenty four hours a day, three hundred and sixty five days a year. This is the unknown plight of the asylum seeker, the ignored plea of the child, and the forlorn destiny of many.

Ignorance and materialism plague today's society. Most people don't know who Amanda Vanstone is, most are unaware of the true nature of the so called 'Pacific Solution'. Students these days are more interested in who tops the charts, who was seen with whom, and let's not forget, which celebrity is having a baby. Most are happy in their bourgeois cocoon, with their i-pods, mobile phones, and portable DVD players, but for those of us who care, who were not distracted by the budget and hopes of tax cuts, realised John Howard and Amanda Vanstone trying to tighten the immigration laws.

In light of these horrifying proposed changes, it is imperative that our immigration scheme is investigated. The current state of the 'Pacific Solution', sees children back in mandatory detention, and is in effect a step backward. Not only that, but is a blatant breach of Australia's duties as a signatory of the Convention on the Right of the Child. Under articles 22 and 37, a child is not to be incarcerated, and that if a child is a refugee they are to be protected. To top all that off, the government is supposed to act in the best interest of the child. The Australian federal government has disregarded all these universal moral principles, and clearly not acting in the best interest of the child, but instead favouring of a xenophobic and inhumane policy.

Asylum seekers by their very nature are fleeing from a place for purposes of refuge. Do you think any person would do such things, if they had another option? These people are clearly very desperate. However before they have even reached dry land, they are carted off to an island with barbed wire fences, and meagre conditions. Our government is paranoid of these people, claiming, that they will overrun our country, or be the next terrorist cell. This is a ridiculous notion, which they have maintained is protecting our country. The government has even tried to turn us against the victims, by labelling them, illegal immigrants and queue jumpers as though they have committed some sort of crime. However the sad thing is, the only crime being perpetrated is by the government against these vulnerable and dolorous people. It should not be a case of form filling, but of basic human compassion. They are not feral animals to be caught and caged, but fellow human beings that deserve respect and help.

The 'Pacific Solution', allows for our own Guantanamo Bay, as it were, where we lock people up, but they are not entitled to our prisoner rights. The government has also allowed the living conditions to become appalling. They have achieved this despicable aim through choosing countries that have not ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child, which means that they may treat children in a worse way than Australia otherwise could under The Convention. Under these proposed changes, children will be detained for an indefinite period of time, as opposed to the Convention's 'shortest possible period of time'. This indefinite detention has and will continue to traumatise the children. This has been highlighted before in Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission's (HREOC) own inquiry, The National Inquiry into Children in Immigration Detention, as well as various studies in the UK, and the rest of Europe. These sources tell us that children while in detention, and in fact after leaving detention, are considerably more likely to be suicidal, develop depression, suffer post-traumatic stress disorder and or be afflicted by a nutritional disease.

Despite this horrible, doom and gloom affair, their situation can be remedied. However changes will not be made by the bureaucrats in seats of power but instead by us. The onus is on us, the people to have compassion and share their grief. Remember, each time a baby in detention cries, it is crying for help, each time a refugee suicides, they are trying to make you listen, each time a women sobs in deep despair, they are begging for succour. Now, think not of what you can do about it but of what you will.

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