



Leader of the Opposition

Dr Bryan Gaensler
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Dear Dr Gaensler

Thank you for your letter about Labor's policy on asylum seekers.

Labor has adopted a framework for a comprehensive long-term solution to the issue of asylum seekers – a solution that is tough on border protection but compassionate.

Labor understands that Australians are a generous people willing to do their fair share to address the global problem of refugees through an orderly system of processing and resettlement. At the same time, the problem of people smuggling needs to be dealt with globally and regionally as it has the potential to corrode the ability of nations to engage in an orderly system of resettlement of those most in need and it puts asylum seekers in real danger.

Labor believes this requires a comprehensive long term solution involving:

- Dealing with the problem at source;
- Dealing with the problem with transit countries;
- Securing our own borders with sustainable surveillance and response;
- A better system for the processing of asylum seekers who reach Australia; and
- High-level, co-operative engagement with the international community.

Following my Australia Day announcement calling for the release of all children from behind the razor wire of detention centres, we have now endorsed the following additional significant measures:

- The government should be put back in control of the detention centres, with Australian Protective Service replacing the ACM private security firm;
- The Woomera detention centre should be mothballed, as recommended by the Government's own Independent Detention Centre Advisory Group (IDAG), and detainees moved to other existing facilities;
- Media access to detention centres should be permitted, with appropriate protocols; and
- The recently announced Afghan resettlement allowance should be extended to Afghans on Temporary Protection Visas and to other ethnic groups, to facilitate their return home.

Labor's framework recognises that mandatory detention is required to enable identity, security and health checking of asylum seekers. It is also required to ensure that asylum seekers, who have failed the test of being a refugee and are at a high risk of absconding, do not abscond. We believe that there is not just one form of mandatory detention. Labor has already given its support to getting children out of detention. Labor will in its policy review process consider other variations to the current detention model, including the nature and duration of detention.

I hope this helps you understand Labor's position on this complex issue. Thank you for taking the trouble to write to express your views and to contribute to our consideration of this matter.

Yours sincerely



SIMON CREAN