

# OFFSHORE PROCESSING & MANDATORY DETENTION: NOT 'SAVING LIVES' BUT DESTROYING THEM

Australia's major political parties continue to assert that deterrent policies (including offshore processing/never settle in Australia/ mandatory detention) prevent drownings and deny people smugglers 'a product to sell'.

**HOWEVER considerable professional research and multiple expert assessments have found these claims to be wrong. This is a summary of some of that evidence.**

(Hence please note that there are [active links to source material](#) in this document to ensure veracity is not in doubt.)

## THE FACTS

1. There is no doubt that there are fewer drownings in Australian waters off the northern coast of the continent since boat turnbacks and indefinite offshore detention have been implemented. But this does not equate to the lives of people seeking asylum being saved. In many cases, it doesn't even equate to drownings being prevented. What *is* true is that:
  - (a) statistics and experts in international immigration indicate that **more refugees are drowning by taking people smugglers' boats to traverse longer and more treacherous routes and that the business of people smugglers continues to thrive**
  - (b) turning back unsafe vessels requires them to be at sea for the return journey in the waters that cause so much concern; and
2. Those who do not take risky boat journeys are **highly likely to be in equally dangerous scenarios that could cause irreparable harm or death through severe illness (physical/mental) or injury**
3. **The end does not justify the means** i.e. if the objective of the policies is to save lives (from being lost at sea), then why subject those lives to other circumstances that could also result in death or deprive people of a life worth living by taking away their freedom, mental/physical health and their capacity to contribute to a functioning society? **Saving lives only to inflict more damage on people who are already fleeing persecution is perpetuating the criminality of the oppressive regimes that forces people to seek asylum in the first place.**

## THE EVIDENCE

The Australian Parliamentary Library page: [Immigration Detention in Australia](#) states clearly that:  
***"there is no credible evidence that the threat of mandatory detention stops people from seeking refuge, but may instead be ineffective as a deterrent and lead to more risky unauthorised migration trends."***

### **DROWNINGS HAVE NOT ABATED ...**

**While people may be saved from death by drowning in the Indian Ocean, findings are that the policies now in place actually force desperate people to take longer and more perilous routes on makeshift boats/flotation devices – ensuring people smugglers have an ongoing and prosperous business.**

Dr Violeta Moreno-Lax (founding Director of the Immigration Law programme, Queen Mary University London, and sought-after expert consultant in international refugee and migration law) published ['The Interdiction of Asylum Seekers at Sea: Law and \(mal\)practice in Europe and Australia'](#) in May 2017 with the [Kaldor Centre for International Refugee Law, UNSW Sydney](#). In this report, she asserts that deflection and containment measures are likely to **"channel asylum boats through ever more perilous routes and multiply fatalities"**.

She cites the UNHCR October 2016 report '[Mediterranean death toll soars to all-time high](#)' which explains that **the strategies of people smugglers continue to shift – providing passage for people seeking asylum across more treacherous waters than ever before in even lower quality vessels, as well as organising mass embarkations of thousands of people at a time.** As Gabriella Sanchez (Research Fellow at [Monash University's Border Crossing Observatory](#)) in "[The myth of the people smugglers' 'business model'](#)" concludes:

*“human smugglers are first and foremost, transit brokers, facilitators of specific segments of a journey. As such, their role is to identify routes that may ease (amid the precariousness and drama involved) the challenges surrounding the extra-legal nature of such travels. Furthermore, we should not forget human smugglers work with a highly specific clientele: those who have consistently been denied access to any kind of official recognition from a nation-state and who are therefore unable to travel under the protection provided by visas or passports. Threatening refugee seekers with the inability to settle in Australia does not constitute a strong or effective deterrence mechanism. At the time they embark in their journey, refugees' main focus is not on the logistics of resettlement, but on being able to leave behind the extreme conditions they face. To the smugglers, the Australian government's decision simply means they have to come up with new routes for a segment of clients that is unlikely to disappear.”*

(The UN's Special Rapporteur of the Human Rights Council) Agnes Callamard's report to the UN General Assembly in 2017 even goes so far as to infer *intent* from governments whose policies focus on the protection of their own borders and lead people smugglers to adjust to more dangerous routes elsewhere:

*Deterrence policies are punitive, including policies ranging from securing the more accessible border entry points—thereby purposefully funnelling the migration flows into more hazardous terrain – to the imposition of strict detention and return policies.*

### **Processes like turnbacks/pushbacks ensure that unsafe boats remain at sea for longer and therefore don't align with a policy motivated by saving people from drowning.**

As the [UN's global expert on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions, Callamard's report, 'Unlawful Death of Refugees and Migrants'](#), was scathing in relation to a growing environment where **refugees and migrants are demonised**; the act of moving to another place is **criminalised** and countries design migration policies based on **deterrence** and **militarisation, tolerating the risk of migrant deaths as part of controlling entry**. Australia's policy of forcibly intercepting asylum seeker boats and pushing them back to their port of origin was given particular mention by the Human Rights Special Rapporteur in relation to her formal conclusion that:

*“Push-back measures, in addition to violating the principle of 'non-refoulement', may also amount to excessive use of force whenever officials place refugees or migrants intentionally and knowingly in circumstances where they may be killed or their lives endangered because of the environment.”*

Director of [the Castan Centre for Human Rights Law](#) and Monash University Professor Sarah Joseph (who has conducted numerous human rights training programs for AusAID, DFAT and others), infers that **the 'saving lives' justification has political or other non-humanitarian motives when she states that “[the mantra of 'stop the boats' has been around much longer than the explicit concern about drowning.](#)”**

Professor Joseph discusses the issue of asylum seeker boats that approach the Australia coast only to be intercepted by Australian patrol boats and escorted away, concluding [“to where we do not know. It is surely safer to let them dock, rather than to send them off to the wide ocean again.”](#)

In weighing up whether the stated objective – ‘to prevent drownings’ – is evidenced by the Australian government's actions, Professor Joseph lists some specific incidents where:

- [Australia has allegedly paid people smugglers to return to Indonesia with their human cargo \(with evidence from Indonesia indicating such payments took place\) whereupon that vessel had to be rescued from an Indonesian reef](#) (N.B. [A Senate Inquiry into the matter was never completed due to the calling of the 2016 Federal Election](#)) and
- forced returns by way of orange lifeboats are another unsafe measure, with three people allegedly drowning in a river after such a return.

Comprehensive information on the number of boats that receive this treatment is unavailable from the Australian government. So we cannot know the outcomes of forcing unsafe boats to traverse twice the distance. However, it seems likely that were there to be numerous fatalities on return journeys that these would at least be reported

by Indonesia. So we can only hope that as few as possible experience adverse outcomes as they re-navigate their passage via precarious modes of transport. Even so, this kind of approach can hardly be adjudged as having safety as its focus – in fact, it entirely contradicts the oft-repeated motive of preventing drownings.

The evidence and expert insight makes it clear that Australia’s politicians can make no claim to have deterred people smugglers or saved lives because confining the assessment to the prevention of drownings solely in the body of water off the country’s northern coast, is a blinkered view when no one could argue that this is, quite patently, a global issue where alternate outcomes for people seeking asylum rarely fail to have tragic implications.

## **DEATHS OR LIFE DEGRADATION BY MEANS OTHER THAN DROWNING ARE NO IMPROVEMENT ...**

**Those who do not take risky boat journeys are inevitably in circumstances that are harmful or where there is no future for them.**

### **REFUGEE CAMPS**

Despite the UNHCR’s best efforts, limited funding and the ever-increasing number of displaced people can mean that their camps throughout the world can be places where safety and stability don’t exist.

**Overcrowding, malnutrition, disease (due to serious issues with food, water, sanitation and housing), violence and government/local resistance are all too common.** Just a few specific examples are:

**COX’S BAZAR, BANGLADESH** – described as “the gates of hell” by World Vision’s Tim Costello where The World Food Programme (the leading humanitarian organisation fighting hunger worldwide) found that “one in four Rohingya children are suffering from MALNUTRITION”

**CAMPS IN TANZANIA** where

Only a few months ago, the UNHCR reported that they were 50,000 shelters short of meeting the most basic needs of their inhabitants, making DISEASE rife and PERSONAL SECURITY a serious issue

**CAMPS IN CHAD** where

Data collected by UNHCR and various partners in 19 camps (hosting a total of 393,161 Sudanese, Central African, Nigerian, Congolese and other nationalities) has shown that vulnerable refugees, especially children and women are exposed to SEXUAL AND GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE (SGBV) on a daily basis

**THE DADABB COMPLEX OF CAMPS IN KENYA** (hosting hundreds of thousands of inhabitants of Somali origin) where There is the continued threaten of closure by the Kenyan government due to a chronic lack of financial support from the international community and, with the growing issue of Somali refugees being scapegoated for Al Shabaab attacks, Somali people in Kenya have been subjected to ARBITRARY ARREST, EXTORTION, HARASSMENT AND VIOLENCE, with many FORCIBLY RETURNED to Somalia where bloodshed and poverty remain endemic

And because there is no ‘queue’, camps continue to be the sites of “protracted refugee situations” (PRS) i.e. **where genuine refugees remain in a camp in ‘an intractable state of limbo’ for 5 years or more with no prospect of a solution.** In 2014, UNHCR representatives were quoting that some people were in a PRS for up to 17 years. In an article by Professor Howard Adelman (founder/ director of York University’s Centre for Refugee Studies and award-winning author of works on refugee repatriation, policy and resettlement), it’s stated that more than **72% of the millions of refugees in UNHCR camps are living in protracted situations, often where the location country will not grant the rights of refugees to move and seek employment.** So these people stagnate in conditions affecting their physical and mental health where even death is a real possibility.

## LIMBO LOCATIONS

Even in circumstances where refugees are permitted to live in the community (e.g. Indonesia) rather than being detained/ held in camps, [refugees have no rights to work or study as they wait for permanent resettlement to a country where they can have productive stable lives](#). The fact that [the UNHCR is unable to provide any form of support for the majority of people in these situations is worsened by refugees being vulnerable to discrimination and harassment as well as having to navigate a new language and culture](#). This inevitably leaves people **socially isolated as well as unsupported**. **These issues have had greater impact as a result of Australia's policy of offshore processing where there is no chance of resettlement in Australia**. Former recipient of the DFAT New Colombo Plan Scholarship, Tom Brown (now working in Indonesia with [an NGO supporting displaced people](#)) and [Dr Antje Missbach](#) have found that:

*["Since Operation Sovereign Borders came into effect, Indonesia has struggled to cope with hosting more asylum seekers and refugees for increasing periods of time."](#)*

## FORCED REPATRIATION/ REFOULEMENT

Obviously it is impossible to know if – and if so, how many – people who have left their country of origin due to physical danger/oppression have undertaken '[spontaneous return](#)' having encountered challenges or impediments on their quest for safe permanent resettlement. For people with "[a well-founded fear of persecution for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinions](#)", **unforced** repatriation is highly unlikely when the numerous and/or ongoing life-threatening risks taken in efforts to reach safe resettlement are seen as tolerable and preferable to the situation from which they have fled.

Even the validity of '[assisted voluntary returns](#)' is considered questionable as these programs "[have been criticized by scholars, migrants' rights advocates and UNHCR, who point out that 'voluntary return' should imply that there is a plausible legal alternative to returning, rather than return in the face of a total lack of regularised alternatives](#)". The International Organisation for Migration defines 'voluntary return' as:

*["a type of return based on the voluntary decision of an individual. A voluntary decision is defined by the absence of any physical, psychological, or material coercion and is based on adequate, available, accurate, and objective information"](#)*.

**So if someone seeking asylum is actively (physically, psychologically or materially) prevented from the consideration for resettlement** to which they have a legal right under the [1951 UN Convention on Refugees](#) (defined on the [Australian government website as "the key international instrument that regulates the obligations of states to protect refugees fleeing from persecution"](#)) **and is then forced – due to having no other choice – to return to the place from which they have escaped, this is coerced and not voluntary repatriation**. The responsibility for the outcomes of the inevitable further, now inescapable, persecution then lies with those who limited the options. If it is a government whose policies and practices induced return, then that country not only bears the burden of the resultant human toll but of the legal implications since **non-refoulement is a non-negotiable aspect of international law that is an official and binding aspect (Article 33) of the UN Refugee Convention**. Australia is a signatory to the Convention and obligated to uphold its principles and [until recently the Australian Migration Act incorporated articles – including that relating to non-refoulement into domestic law](#). So in order to attempt to validate the internationally outlawed practice of refoulement, [in December 2014, the Australian government changed the Migration Act to claim the feasibility of forced return of a person without a visa](#). **However**, to ensure a refugee has no other option but to return to their persecution remains criminal both morally and internationally and no strategic adjustment to domestic law justifies ignoring the obligations on a signatory to the Refugee Convention. Nor does it make a heinous act against innocent victims of persecution any less heinous.

## HOSTILE RESETTLEMENT ENVIRONMENTS

As prejudices and fears are inflamed and the rise of toxic nationalism expands, attitudes to refugees are changing for the worse e.g. since the fall of Mohamed Morsi, the UNHCR reports that [Syrian refugees in Egypt have gone from being supported to becoming targets of the Egyptian army and the society in general](#). [Accused of supporting the Muslim Brotherhood, Syrians and Palestinians have been victims of](#)



[“systematic physical and verbal attacks”](#), according to Marwa Hesham of the UNHCR. [Many Syrians have lost their jobs and Syrian-owned businesses have been destroyed](#). *Refugees International* revealed that [Syrians have become increasingly vulnerable as reports continued to pour in of arrests, detentions, and deportations with Syrians demonised in Egyptian media and children attacked on the way to school](#).

So, essentially, deterrent policies serve only the political parties that espouse them. They do not hinder the people smuggling business, they do not keep vulnerable people from harm and, in appealing to the basest fears of a population, they create division and intolerance through the perpetuation of inaccuracies. Dr Daniel Ghezelbash (*Senior Lecturer at Macquarie Law School whose research focuses on comparative refugee and immigration law*) has recently published [his findings on the propensity of governments to borrow and adapt policies from other nations to suit their own political ends](#).

*“We have entered dangerous times, with respect to states’ attitudes towards the hard-won protections of the refugee convention ... – a deterrence paradigm, where states are continuing to pay lip service to their obligations under the refugee convention, but are bending over backwards to come up with new and innovative ways of keeping asylum seekers from accessing these protections.”*

And while this escalates, refugees in a range of life-threatening and increasingly debilitating displaced scenarios will continue to see any method of reaching a safe permanent resettlement as a risk worth taking.

### ***INDEFINITE DETENTION IN DIFFICULT CIRCUMSTANCES DESTROYS HOPE – AND WHERE THERE’S NO HOPE, THERE’S NO ‘LIFE’ ...***

**To ‘prevent people from drowning’ but then leave them in the purgatory of confinement with no future has profound negative effects. Psychologically, [a human being becomes ‘nothing’ without purpose or prospects](#) – and if the environment is also dangerous/unhealthy, the serious or fatal impact of mental and/or physical health issues on detainees is inevitable. These practices are totally at odds with an objective of saving or valuing life in any way and only serve to emphasise the emptiness of the justification of preventing drownings in a specific body of water in Australian territory.**

The personal toll – physical and mental – of mandatory detention on people seeking asylum is well documented. Whether or not the members of the major Australian political parties recognise/investigate the numerous reports of abuses that occur within detention/regional processing centres (particularly those managed offshore), there can be no doubt about the **extremely damaging effects of indefinite confinement**. Fleay and Briskman’s [studies of mandatory detention in Australia \(published in Oxford Academic’s ‘Refugee Survey Quarterly’\)](#) – have led them to conclude not only that **deterioration of physical health is inescapable in these environments** but that **“daily life in detention is filled with boredom that feeds despair”**. And the discursive essay, [“Lethal Hopelessness ...” \(Proctor et al\)](#) provides distressing evidence of the outcomes of that despair. With the [Human Rights Watch Annual Report on 2017](#) indicating that of around **1,940 refugees and people seeking asylum at that time in PNG and Nauru, “most have been there for more than four years”**, it is no surprise then that findings also revealed that **“many suffer from mental health conditions, exacerbated by years of detention and uncertainty about their futures.”** People living in restrictive conditions with little/no information on the progress of their refugee or immigration claims/applications experience levels of anxiety, despair and endless frustration so destabilising that **[mental health issues can continue to torment sufferers indefinitely even if their circumstances improve](#)** (*Australian Human Rights Commission 2017*). Convicted criminals have a better sense of the duration of their incarceration and of their future. For innocent people held in offshore facilities, their interminable limbo is exacerbated by the fact that even when they are assessed as legitimate refugees, they continue to exist without any of the freedoms they escaped their original persecution to find, often in a facility overseen by guards near/within [communities that are understandably resistant to their presence](#). And because they have already been traumatised and exhausted every possible avenue to find a stable and productive life, [people become totally and utterly devoid of hope](#). This continues to have fatal consequences.

In his [Commonwealth Immigration Ombudsman's 2013 report on "Suicide and self-harm in the immigration network"](#) (which was deemed necessary following the independent reviews and coronial reports into incidents and deaths in Australian detention centres and the [final report from the 'Joint Select Committee on Australia's Immigration Detention Network'](#)), Colin Neave notes that:

*"international and Australian [Steele, Proctor et al] evidence demonstrates that immigration detention in a closed environment for longer than six months has a significant, negative impact on mental health."*

Quoting the independent research of [Sundram and Loi](#), the Ombudsman's report also notes that:

*"because of the protracted refugee determination process, some asylum seekers develop a clinical syndrome which is distinct from other trauma-related mental disorders. We've labelled this disorder – 'protracted asylum-seeker syndrome'".*

These findings consolidate the conclusions of Professor David Isaacs whose first-hand experience on Nauru led to an [article in the Journal of Medical Ethics \(published by the British Medical Journal\)](#) addressing:

*"the moral dilemma of whether to work in immigration detention at all and effectively condone what amounts to torture, and if [practitioners] do work there, they must decide for how long and to what extent they report on harms".*

[Isaacs reiterates that "there is strong evidence that prolonged immigration detention results in severe mental health problems including anxiety, depression, post-traumatic stress disorder, self-harm and suicidality."](#)

Neave's investigation revealed some of the issues contributing to suicide and self-harm by refugees in Australian facilities which include the **vulnerability** of the population (whose **history includes torture and trauma**); the **isolated environment**; the **lack of meaningful activities** and **immigration processing delays/uncertainty**.

So it is not aberrant that [the 2013 report from the Australian Human Rights Commission](#) states that:

*"Between 1 July 2010 and 20 June 2013, there were 12 deaths in immigration detention facilities. Coroners have found that six of those deaths were suicides. These figures on self-harm reflect the longstanding concern that Australia's system of mandatory and indefinite detention has a detrimental impact on the mental health of those detained."*

**It is these consistently tragic outcomes that directly make a lie of claims of 'saving lives'.** When the circumstances imposed by Australia upon people (who have withstood the trauma and physical trials of their forced displacement) have become so intolerable that some individuals have felt no choice but to terminate their own existence, the public pride at preventing drownings from those within the governments enacting such policies is all the more unpalatable.

**Without exception, numerous studies have conclusively borne out that the negative outcomes of indefinite detention occur irrespective of the specific management of and conditions within these facilities. To then factor in the difficult living situations of the people held on Nauru and Manus Island only serves to add to the punishment that people seeking asylum are faced with through those **relentless hours**. Isaacs assesses the conditions as "**extraordinarily harsh**", providing his personal account:**

*The conditions we witnessed typified those described by Goffman as **occurring in institutions such as asylums, prisons and concentration camps**, which he characterises as causing '**mortification of the self**'. Detainees **lacked privacy**. Families were housed in adjoining tents, and guards walk in without warning. Showers and toilets were up to 120m away. **At night, the long dark walk under the eyes of guards was enough to deter many women and children, who wet the bed, then put the mattress out to dry in the sun. Shower time was limited; guards would offer longer if women exposed themselves. There was constant bullying and humiliation. We also observed dehumanisation and denial of personhood: children and adults coming to the medical centre are referred to by their boat numbers.***

The litany of damaging procedures used in immigration detention (as well as the inevitable effects of the confinement) also include situations where "**some Australian healthcare professionals have helped force-feed detainees who go on hunger strike and helped chemically restrain people for deportation, acts that collude with significant infringements of autonomy and human rights**". [Paul Stevenson, a psychologist/traumatologist whose 14 deployments to Manus/Nauru overwhelmed even his experiences following the Boxing Day Tsunami and the Bali bombings admits that "in my entire career of 43 years I have never seen more atrocity than I have seen in the incarcerated situations of Manus Island and Nauru"](#). And [Dr Peter Young's submission to the Parliamentary Select Committee on Nauru](#) is a catalogue of warnings of serious health impacts issued to the Immigration Department whose responses, disturbingly, seem to have been active/passive denial of the ongoing damaging implications. <sup>^</sup> [And these are not isolated voices](#).

<sup>^</sup> [The low levels of transparency and accountability, and few opportunities for external oversight in the offshore detention system](#) mean that the only **qualified sources with firsthand knowledge** of conditions and treatment and their effects are **those who have been in professional roles in these facilities whose ethical responsibility has compelled them to speak publicly**. The fact that healthcare experts like Stevenson and Drs [Peter Young](#) and [Nick Martin](#) and others have dealt with [repercussions](#) from their professionalism, diligence and advocacy is a damning indictment on [a system that should have the same kind of external oversight and review that is an essential element of all closed institutions throughout the Western world](#).

It is worth noting that specific information like this is not only available through renowned medical and legal publications but, as with other important documentation on these issues, it has been **made known to members of our current and previous governments**. The earlier recounting of Professor Issacs' Nauru experience was included in [Anna Burke \(MP\)'s contribution to the February 2016 'Grievance Debate on Asylum Seekers' in federal parliament \(Hansard excerpt accessible at this link\)](#). So the current Minister responsible for immigration will have already availed himself of the many expert submissions – including those cited by Ms Burke that day – and one would hope that any other politician making statements on this issue would do the same. It's significant to note that Ms Burke also reminded the parliament during this debate of the findings of [the UN Rapporteur on Torture, Juan Méndez, in his March 2015 report – that conditions in Australian offshore detention facilities amount to cruel treatment contrary to the Convention Against Torture \(CAT\)](#) i.e.

*“the Government of Australia, by failing to provide adequate detention conditions; end the practice of detention of children; and put a stop to the escalating violence and tension at the Regional Processing Centre, has violated the right of the asylum seekers, including children, to be free from torture or cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment, as provided by articles 1 and 16 of the CAT.”*

The assessment of **'torture'** was most recently confirmed by Professor Nils Melzer, who took over the role of Special Rapporteur on Torture in 2016. [His February 2018 report to the Human Rights Council of the United Nations](#) was just as, if not more, damning. Specifically citing three legal cases where **multiple violations by Australia had been found in relation to the rights (to liberty; to protection from inhuman treatment; to family life; and the right of children to protection) of 51 people (including children)**, it was stated that:

*“The Human Rights Committee has repeatedly considered that “the combination of the arbitrary character of the [...] detention, its protracted and/or indefinite duration, the refusal to provide information and procedural rights to the [detainees] and the difficult conditions of detention are cumulatively inflicting serious psychological harm upon them, and constitute treatment contrary to article 7 of the Covenant.” [which reads “No one shall be subjected to torture or to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment.”]*

The report clearly recognises **the profound impact of the “unjustified detention, delayed access to procedural rights, or moderate physical discomfort”** being imposed on detainees by the Australian government – key issues often played down by those espousing support for the measures – when it highlights that **“even factors that may not necessarily amount to ill-treatment when applied as an isolated measure and for a very limited period of time ... can cross the relevant threshold if applied cumulatively and/or for a prolonged or open-ended period of time.”** And the Special Rapporteur leaves no doubt that **'torture'** is the correct assessment of Australia's deterrent approach to people seeking asylum when he says that:

*“detention based solely on migration-status, as such, can also amount to torture, most notably where it is being intentionally imposed or perpetuated for purposes such as deterring, intimidating, or punishing irregular migrants or their families, coercing them into withdrawing their requests for asylum, subsidiary protection or other stay, agreeing to voluntary repatriation ...”.*

So with the significant and ever-increasing body of evidence available, no one can honestly claim that lives 'saved' due to prevention of drownings in a specific body of water have not been lost elsewhere, have not suffered untold harm or that those lives now have some level of safety, quality and purpose. And no one should be appraising the current policies as 'successful' –

**WHEN A CHILD ON NAURU CAN'T STOP SAYING THAT A VOICE IS TELLING HER:  
'DYING IS BETTER THAN LIVING, YOU'LL BE FREE'.**

This summary information from (linked) authoritative source material was compiled by an Australian citizen with no political affiliations in response to the following comment by the Federal MP for Brisbane, Trevor Evans relating to the February 2018 negative assessment of Australia's treatment of people seeking asylum by the United Nations Special Rapporteur on Torture:

*“I remain of the view that there is a big difference between the experiences of the few remaining asylum seekers in Papua New Guinea and Nauru and what is usually referred to as torture, in terms of what is being done to prisoners of war and political dissidents around the world including today, and I think most Australians would intuitively agree it is wrong to equate the two. The UN would be more persuasive in these matters if it applied consistent standards across countries and it didn't appoint some of the countries with the worst records on human rights abuses to these bodies. You're aware from our conversations that I don't hold my position because of “party politics” or “positioning”. You know that I am of the view that your proposed solution (i.e. to end offshore processing and mandatory detention) will lead to more people dying, who otherwise wouldn't die, which I see as a far, far worse moral outcome.”*

It's hoped that any distribution of this document will facilitate access to some of the evidence and expert insights (and lead to greater exploration of the growing collection of comprehensive and factual material) on this issue for those who have not had the opportunity to incorporate such findings into their assessment of a significant matter of human rights.