

Why Manus and Nauru?

In 2012 the then Australian Prime Minister, Julia Gillard, set up an 'Expert Panel' to advise on Asylum Seeker policy. Unfortunately, the Panel were not instructed to restrict suggestions to those that didn't involve harm. Their key recommendation was the re-opening of offshore processing on Manus and Nauru.

Over the period August 2012 to August 2014, about 30,000 asylum seekers arrived by boat to Australia, of these 3,127 were chosen to be taken by force offshore. There was a deliberate decision to select those with young looking children to send a message that we will send even the most vulnerable.* The other 27,000 are on their way to integrating and contributing in our communities.

The people taken offshore have committed no crime and have been given no end date to their exile. They are used indefinitely as a deterrent to help Australia control borders.



What is the effect of indefinite detention offshore?

Most have now been there over 5 years. The UNHCR has found 88% of the adults have developed mental health problems during this time.* There are 137 children still on Nauru.* Children growing up in a traumatic environment.

More than 103 previous workers on Manus and Nauru have now come forward, risking jail, to detail the harm.*

*Among them was a six-year-old girl who had tried to kill herself and a two-year-old boy with such severe behaviour problems a doctor had prescribed anti-psychotic medicines. Their parents were in despair. ... We left with the view that these were the most traumatised children we had ever consulted on - Professor David Isaacs consultant paediatrician.**

Of those sent offshore 11 have died, 11+ have been deported by force, and 846 have chosen, often under duress, to return to danger. The US has accepted 310, who are now living in freedom. Some are in Australia. About 1,600 remain offshore.*

Australia continues to reject New Zealand's compassionate offer to take 150 each year.

Could Australia control our borders without Manus and Nauru?

We have a navy and air-force with capabilities to defend us. Stopping people coming on used fishing boats is not a big ask.

So why is the harm, and huge cost, of Manus and Nauru still happening?

Both the main parties support these policies purely for political reasons. Not only are innocent men women and children being harmed, but Australia is being harmed. Having leaders who use others for their own gain is detrimental to us all. It teaches us to harden our hearts and not care. In the end it will make Australia a place of hate.

How can it change?

We need to let our local member and senators know what we think of what they are doing. That our votes will not go to anyone who supports these policies of harm. Together we, with perseverance, will make a difference for these people.

Please contact your local federal MP and Senators.

For more ideas and references* see www.adelaidevigil.com

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