



MEDIA RELEASE

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Parliament must heed findings of Senate Committee on Migration Bill

Australian Lawyers for Human Rights (ALHR) today welcomed the first recommendation contained in the report of the Senate Legal and Constitutional Committee that the Migration Amendment (Designated Unauthorised Arrivals) Bill ought not to proceed.

“This bipartisan report is based on significant evidence which shows there are serious consequences if this Bill is passed,” said Eve Lester, spokesperson for ALHR.

“If passed, the Bill will send all asylum seekers arriving in Australia by boat to Nauru or Manus Island, PNG.”

“The Bill ignores Australia’s obligations in international and human rights law,” she said.

“Australia is avoiding its first country of asylum responsibilities and is manipulating the principle of burden and responsibility sharing amongst countries. The Bill effectively wipes Australia off the protection map and will result in significant damage to the international protection regime.”

“Australia cannot be permitted to close its sea borders, either physically or legislatively, and thereby turn its back on human rights abuses taking place in neighbouring countries,” said Lester.

“Australian law-makers should be reluctant to expand the Department of Immigration’s non-reviewable powers. Such powers, in the absence of independent scrutiny and access by Australian lawyers, doctors and media, will perpetuate rather than reform the Department’s poor record as documented in the Palmer, Comrie and Ombudsman’s reports,” said Lester.

ALHR expressed great concern, however, that the Government has decided to proceed with the Bill in the House of Representatives without amendment, in spite of the Committee’s findings.

Condemning the political motivations for the Bill, Lester emphasised that “The grant of asylum is a neutral, humanitarian non-political act. Justice cannot be abandoned for the sake of political expediency.”

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