Committee Secretary
Joint Select Committee on Australia's Immigration Detention Network
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

Dear Madam/Sir
I wish to make further comments to this Joint Select Committee since visiting Maribrynong Immigration Detention Centre on Monday 8th August 2011, this week. The experience of the detention process on that day enables me to make extra comment.

Fact Sheet 82 Immigration Detention Key immigration detention values #1.
Mandatory detention is an essential component of strong border control..
I wish to challenge that basic premise of the Australian government's Immigration Policy "No-one chooses to be an asylum seeker."; "I am not an animal" ; " I left my country to be free"

Terms of Reference (b)
impact of length of detention & the appropriateness of facilities and services for asylum seekers:
The men that I visit, mainly Tamil & Hazara, are young married men who are just as anxious about their families as they are about being held in mandatory detention.
Their stay is for months & years, yet on *Fact Sheet 82 Immigration Detention* #4 states that "Detention that is indefinite or otherwise arbitary isnot acceptable . . . . [and] would be subject to regul;ar review."
It is quite dismaying to have some detainees say that I am the only visitor that they have.
No wonder their mental health is deeply challenged. It is difficult for detainees to have a sense of time and to comprehend the wait for interviews with relevant Immigration officials.
Terms of reference (d)
health, safety and well-being of asylum seekers:
Because of the length of their detention, & the impact therefore on their mental health, the facilities at Maribrynong IDC maybe varied but the asylum seekers are not well enough, physically & emotionally, to participate.
At my last visit to Maribrynong IDC I was told that the detainees arenot always told of a visitors request to see them. It is the network between the detainees that inform each other of the various visits that are made. As I give my time voluntarily, I try to visit fortnightly.
I am told that these visits make the detainee feel good. At the close, it is obvious by their more relaxed attitude warmth of farewell.
Terms of Reference (q)
length of time detainees have been held in the detention network:
I have been visiting asylum seekers since 2003 at Baxter IDC (now closed) and Maribrynong IDC. Whether Iraqi, Iranian, Palestinian, Tamil, Hazara all have been moved to 2 or 3 IDC during their respective stays in Australian detention. This adds up to years waiting for a visa, new staff and officials to relate, further wait for assessment.
For those who are granted a visa of some sort, their rehabilitation into society is very fraught: dismay sets in when it is realized that they are unable to cope in society, despite their having employable skills.
Teenage children become incontinent at night; despair sets in when they are unable to keep a job to gain finance to repay relatives, let alone to have an income to meet their daily survival needs in Australia.

Fact Sheet 82 Immigration Detention #5 of Key Immigration values: "Detention in Immigration Detention Centre is only used as a last restort and for the shortest practicable time".
Fact Sheet 82 Immigration Detention#7of Key Immigration values: "Conditions of Detention wil ensure the inherent dignity of the human person"
I would like to challenge the outcomes of these 2 Key Values.
The protracted detention that these men experience suggests that they are not bona fide persons and it preys on their pysche.

Margaret Tonkin