9/8/2011

To : The Committee of The Special Enquiry into Detention on Christmas Island

Dear Committee

As a resident on the Indian Ocean Island of Christmas Island I wish to have my views considered at your enquiry. Firstly, a little history, which seems to get lost or overlooked when the current day's concerns are considered.

When the Detention facility was first suggested by Mr Tuckey, the residents of Christmas Island were consulted. The proposal was that an informal collection of 'home units' would be established to house unfortunate refugees from war torn countries or those who were in fear of their lives because of religious persecution. The Christmas Islanders at that time felt this was a humanitarian effort and were happy to assist in this small way.

Unfortunately what we ended up with was a maximum security prison of unimagined proportions catering for people who could afford and do pay huge sums to people smugglers to gain admission to our great Australian way of life. These people do not wish to stay on Christmas Island but are using our overly generous natures to find a foothold into Australia.

No wonder we feel betrayed.

On top of this is the systematic abuse of the rights of people of the Island.

We have many disadvantages over mainland Australia – too many to list here. But when these 'clients' (we are not allowed to call them refugees), get privileges we could not hope to get and then complain and riot because of their " treatment" I wonder when common sense will prevail.

A few of the indignities suffered include –

1) Their refusal to drink the local water – from pure subterranean streams and processed to Australian Standards
2) Their indolent lifestyle – refusing to observe scheduled meal times (meals provided by the Australian taxpayer). They expect to be housed, fed and cleaned up after, all at taxpayers expense.
3) Their legal fees and all costs of action for their acceptance into Australia is paid by – again – the Australian taxpayers
4) When after exhaustive process their applications do not succeed, we have to put up with their riots and destruction of facilities costing millions of dollars to repair – costing to, once again, the Australian taxpayer
5) Further to these complaints are the problems caused to our environment on Christmas Island. Because of the traffic increase the death toll for the Red Crabs and Robber Crabs unique to the Island is increasing. These Robber crabs are 30 – 70 years old and not able to increase readily. We will have another extinction looming shortly.
6) Roads to the detention centre and also around the settlement area are becoming pot holed and dangerous. With so many millions being spent at the detention centre why cannot there be additional funds for the general area. The centre staff are housed by DIAC but no part of the huge wages they are earning goes back to the shire for the repair and replacement of these facilities. They are not land holders and do not pay rates – we do.

7) Mainland and overseas sourced detention centre staff can be intolerant of short comings which are part of Island life, making business on Island difficult and unpleasant.
8) Initially there was general agreement for the requirements of the detention centre staff to be sourced from businesses on the Island. It now appears the food and most other requirements are being supplied by DIAC at below cost to DIAC staff. Where is the advantage to businesses on the Island? What about the poor locals – we have to pay inflated prices for food and rents which have skyrocketed since the start of the detention era.
9) Community venues are being used and abused by detainees and DIAC staff. A recent incident at the cove saw locals intimidated by noise and threats with a weapon being displayed. These type of incidents – including the escape and breakouts by the detainees, have made many of the population fearful and very wary. Christmas Island was never this intimidated and distrusting.
10) We feel like mushrooms – kept in the dark and fed bullsh--. We are usually the last to know what is happening on Island because we don't have any daily newspaper or radio news broadcast. We are kept informed by bulletins from Canberra or by Television news broadcasts (not always the whole truth and only if it seems to be sensational).

I have barely touched the surface of resentment to this facility and it's holier than thou attitudes.

But I hope that more people express their views – but I doubt it. No notice to the community was given that this enquiry was to be held but you shouldn't think because you don't hear from them that the people are satisfied with the present situation.

Regards

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