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Dear committee,

I am writing to express my concern for the health and safety of asylum seekers in Australia, particularly those who come by boat and especially the children. It is wrong for politicians to use PEOPLE as political pawns.

The impact of the spin and hyperbolae which surrounds “border protection” on those of us in this country who do not have to flee the safety of our homes, is still profound. It is distressing to hear ordinary people, filled with the vitriol drawn from the political and media machine, verbally belittle and dehumanise asylum seekers at any opportunity, devoid of compassion and a peaceful perspective. This does not sound like a country I would want to flee to and it does not make me proud or feel lucky. It bodes ill for the future, when still there are children suffering here, in detention, on our streets and in dysfunctional living situations. All deserve our protection. Compassion breeds compassion.

Compassionate, peaceful solutions must be found.

1. **Children should never be held in confinement**. Full stop. - And if their family are also integrated into Australian Society without detention, then they need not be. Other than in exceptional circumstances, and in line with the best interests of the child, families should be able to stay together – children should not be separated from family members. *****Any unaccompanied children, should never, under any circumstances, be detained - Australia's politicians and citizens should take all duty of care to protect and support these children.

2. **Immigration detention should**:
   - be used as a last resort
   - for the shortest practical time
   - be subject to independent (administrative or judicial) review
   - be subject to independent monitoring and oversight
   - provide a high quality of care and support to prepare asylum seekers for a meaningful life anywhere in the world
   - be accessible to concerned citizens who can offer solace, support or compassion
   - only be used for the specific purposes of managing genuine risk.

1. **Alternatives** to immigration detention **must** be developed, adopted & **implemented ASAP.**

2. **All members of Parliament should** commit to improving the public debate and **refrain from political point-scoring about asylum seeker issues**, acknowledging that it is not illegal to seek asylum and that Australia has freely entered into the international obligations contained in the 1951 Refugee Convention and other international instruments.

Thank you for considering my genuine concern in your deliberations.

Avril Duck