Dear MP/Senator

Congratulations on the Coalition’s re-election to government.

I am writing to request that in your capacity as an elected representative, you give careful and heartfelt consideration to a number of policy positions currently supported by the Coalition, and that you advocate within your party for fairness and justice.

Although the Coalition opposed the Medevac legislation, it is an important safeguard to protect the health of refugees on Manus Island and Nauru. Since the legislation was introduced, a responsible process has been put in place by refugee agencies to ensure proper assessment for people with complex health issues. It is not in the interests of the Coalition to repeal this safeguarding legislation, and it is certainly not in the interests of those for whom health care on Nauru and in PNG is inadequate. Prior to the legislation there were too many horrendous stories where the bureaucratic delays and political expediency placed lives at risk.

For the people we are holding in limbo on Manus Island and Nauru, it is incumbent on Australia to find safe resettlement options, including taking up the offer from New Zealand. The argument that their suffering is somehow essential for of our border protection approach has no basis in fact and violates the most basic of human rights. All Australians are shamed while we continue to hold these people to ransom, denying them freedom and safe futures.

The detention of children does terrible harm. We draw to your urgent attention the incarceration of five children – still held in the MITA in Melbourne. These must be immediately released with their families to safe community settings. Four of these children are under five years old. We appeal to you to ensure this cruelty stops now.

It is coalition policy to withdraw income support and other support services (SRSS support) from people who are awaiting the determination of the claims of refugee status – for many people this waiting period extends to years. It is unnecessary, and totally unconscionable that people, including children, be left destitute without shelter, food and clothing. It is unreasonable to expect that welfare agencies take on this responsibility when there are already significant demands on them due to homelessness and other welfare issues. The policy to withdraw SRSS support is a form of ‘starving people out’ and this is a totally unacceptable approach.

In recent years Australia has developed an unsavoury appetite for deporting people without regard for their well-being once deported. This applies to people seeking asylum who are deported to dangerous situations, as well as people who have in some cases been lived all of their lives in Australia and are then ‘tipped out’ for rather inconsequential reasons. This is a shameful situation.

As a relatively wealthy country Australia can and should treat people with decency. We need to take our fair share of people seeking asylum, including people from our region. We need to restore our reputation as a fair, humane and compassionate country.

Yours sincerely

*[your name & address]*