

# Unhappy Anniversary



"I have been here since I was a boy. I am a man now. Some days I want to die."

Seven years too long

It is not just one young man's voice. Listen to the other voices.

"It is seven years since I've seen my mother."

"My child has had six birthdays and I wasn't there."

"Seven years since my father died and I was not able to go to his funeral."

"My children are growing up without a father."

"We thought Australia was a good, safe place. But it is seven years and we are still in detention. Why?"

Please, ask yourself:

>> As an ordinary, fair-minded Australian, if someone fleeing to safety (from a bushfire, say) arrived at your place, *wouldn't you open the door and bring them in and care for them and make them safe?*

>> Now that we all know what weeks of uncertainty and COVID-19 isolation feels like, *would you want to feel like that for seven long years?*

>> Given that innocent refugees and people seeking asylum have endured seven long years of cruel punishment, *do you think that's enough?*



Please, do or say something today to help refugees.

Did you know?

These men, more than 60 of them, are being held in the Mantra Hotel, Bell Street Preston and have been locked in there for up to a year, even though they were brought from PNG and Nauru – **because they were sick and in need of urgent medical attention.**



>> There are more than a hundred men in a similar situation in a hotel at Kangaroo Point in Brisbane.

>> There are more than a thousand in detention centres, innocent people imprisoned alongside people being deported for committing crimes.

>> There are many thousands more in community detention or on temporary visas, unable to settle permanently and make their contribution to Australia as so many others have done.

**Is this how a decent government fulfils its duty of care to people seeking asylum?**



# Why is the Australian Government keeping desperate people in endless isolation and hopelessness?



**In June 2013, Government wanted to send a message to 'boat people' so they would know how mean Australians can be – so they would know there is no welcome here, ever.**

**People seeking asylum have not been accused, not been charged, not appeared in a court, not been sentenced.**

**Yet still, for seven years and more they are punished, tortured by systemic uncertainty and hopelessness. It is going on right now. Why?**

**Because the Government has some mad idea that refugees will go back 'home'.**

**But there is no 'home' for them anymore. There is no safe place back there. That is why they have fled in desperation to Australia and asked us for asylum, to make them safe.**

## Who is an asylum seeker?

An asylum seeker is a person who has fled from his or her country and seeks legal and physical protection (asylum) as a refugee in another country. Asylum seekers usually try to reach a country which has signed the United Nations Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees (1951). Australia was one of the first countries to sign this international law which sets out the rights of refugees across the world including the right to seek asylum when there is a well-founded fear of persecution.

## Who is a refugee?

Fear of persecution is the basis of refugee claims. Refugees are forced to flee their own countries out of fear for their lives and liberty. Their own governments have not protected them. The decision to leave may be very sudden and often they cannot farewell those who are close to them. They leave with minimal belongings, sometimes only the clothes they are wearing. The journey may be fraught with danger and family members may be lost or die en route. Refugees cannot maintain ties with their homeland for emotional, social and financial needs.

## Coronavirus is a major risk for refugees

- >> Already in poor health, living so close together in prison-like conditions, COVID-19 is an added and deadly risk for those in detention.
- >> Refugees on temporary visas who have to support themselves have been deliberately excluded from access to the JobSeeker payments. Without any income, they and their children are literally destitute.
- >> Refugees who have fled for their lives and experienced trauma have chronically poor physical and mental health. Restricted movement, fear and heightened uncertainty, and destitution add to their mental health risks.

## Reclaim our national decency

Our Federal Government has no decent, fair plan to safely settle our refugees, even after seven years!

### **Whatever small thing you can do, please do it now.**

Learn more about refugees, about their lives and the barriers that Australia creates to deny them their rights. Every human being has the right to be protected, to be treated fairly, to live safely.

### **Speak up. Write. Tweet. Call. Join.**

Find out more at: [www.grandmothersforrefugees.org](http://www.grandmothersforrefugees.org)



### **Please consider a donation.**

Grandmothers for Refugees is a self-supported, entirely volunteer movement. If you would like to support our efforts to build compassionate awareness about refugees in our community, please consider a donation towards

printing and basic costs. You can donate by direct funds transfer to our bank.

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