



22 October 2020

The Hon Scott Morrison MP  
Prime Minister  
Parliament House  
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Prime Minister,

Australian Quakers have an ongoing commitment to the wellbeing of asylum seekers. Many of our members have given practical and moral support to these people in their time of need. At our national gathering in July we made a public statement about having refugees and asylum seekers released into community care with appropriate financial and medical support at this time of pandemic.

We regret that government policy, regardless of which political party is in power, has become so harsh, and that asylum seekers are subject to arbitrary punishment that is contrary to international refugee standards to which Australia is obligated. We believe that most Australians would like to see a change in this situation.

Our attention has been drawn to a way of moving Australia's policy in a more positive direction, following the disruption caused by the pandemic to the flow of people from overseas to Australia. The Kaldor Centre for International Refugee Law (UNSW) has proposed a series of steps that we consider are both humane and effective changes to current policy. The specific moves recommended are that the government:

- (a) Not cancel visas while people are in immigration clearance and seek to lodge a protection claim;
- (b) Ensure that anyone in this situation is interviewed by a trained official from the humanitarian program of Home Affairs;
- (c) Allow these people to proceed to a full asylum procedure, with access to legal advice and interpreters throughout;
- (d) Detain people only as a last resort and for the shortest time possible, and not remove them from Australia until their claim has been determined.

**Australia Yearly Meeting**

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We support this proposal as likely to be effective in achieving a better outcome for asylum seekers, meeting Australia's international refugee obligations more clearly, and ensuring appropriate scrutiny of claims for protection.

Faithfully yours,



Ann Zubrick  
Presiding Clerk

Cc:  
Hon Anthony Albanese MP, Leader of the Opposition  
Hon. Michael McCormack MP, Leader of the Nationals  
Hon Adam Bandt, MP, Leader of the Greens

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