



CONFERENCE OF LEADERS OF RELIGIOUS INSTITUTES IN NSW

Member of Catholic Church Religious Group
ABN 52 476 362 010

Mr D. J. Randall MP
Member for Canning
PO Box 465
Kelmscott WA 6991

30 June 2006.

Dear Mr Randall,

Re: Your comments on The Law Report, 27 June, 2006

I write on behalf of the CLRI Justice committee, a group representing the Conference of Leaders of Religious Institutes in NSW. CLRI represents approximately 4,000 Catholic Religious women and men, and their associates. Many of our members have worked with asylum seekers and refugees, and have visited both Detention Centres and countries to which asylum seekers have been deported. We are aware of the realities of suffering being experienced by many victims of current Australian legislation.

We are concerned that the comments made by you on the Law Report on Wednesday, 27 June do not reflect the reality of either the position of asylum seekers under the proposed legislation, or the integrity of the parliamentarians you have condemned. It is difficult to believe that, as Chair of the Joint Standing Committee on Migration, and Chair of the Government's Backbencher's Committee on Migration, Indigenous and Multicultural Affairs, you could be acting in ignorance in these matters.

1. You must certainly be aware that this legislation is not just a revisiting of the Pacific solution. Its enactment would mean that the whole of Australia in a practical sense would be excised.
2. You must also know that your description of Baxter and Nauru is far from fair. It would be interesting to know how you would describe these places if you or one of your family members were to be detained there for any length of time.
3. Your description of your fellow parliamentarians as anarchists of whom you are sick and tired is an insult to parliamentarians of conviction and conscience who have at this time drawn a line in the sand in supporting the rights of vulnerable asylum seekers to protection and fair treatment.

Comments such as those you have aired on national radio demonstrate a disappointing development in what ought to be a proper discussion and ongoing conversation about the rights of human beings in our country today. They seem to say more about your stated fears of losing the next election than about issues of life and justice, and the rights of the most vulnerable in our contemporary world.

We would hope that discussions in the next weeks would lead to a more just and equitable solution, which would respect the rights of all people and especially those who have suffered torture and indignity. Their stories, as you would clearly know, describe atrocities of all kinds – torture and murder, transmigration and the consequent stacking of the population with foreigners, the strangling of language and culture, the blind opposition to all forms of national feeling, the subversion of the young, the rape of the women, the indoctrination of children, the forced movement of people from tribal lands. Can these seriously take second place to the political careers of those in marginal seats?

We look forward to your reply to this letter.

Yours sincerely,

Jan Barnett rsj

SOCIAL JUSTICE COMMITTEE

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P.O. Box 259 ROSEBERY NSW 1445
(72 Rosebery Ave)

Phone: (02) 9663 2199 Email: clrinsw@ozemail.com.au Website: www.clrinsw.org