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## The Situation in Nauru and Manus Island: Liability for Crimes Against Humanity in the Detention of Refugees and Asylum Seekers

For those who've come across the seas we've boundless plains to share; With courage let us all combine To Advance Australia Fair. These words familiar to all of us are part of our national anthem but is our government really trying to fulfil them? As of April this year there are 1,369 asylum seekers in off shore detention centres waiting to be processed for refuge in Australia. These men, women and children spend around 826 days in these offshore processing centres. Doesn't this completely contradict Australias vow to share our endless plains with those from across the seas? Now trust me, I get that offshore detention centres are vital for the protection of Australias borders but its whats happening on these islands that is appalling. A Sydney based paediatrician, Dr. David Isaacs is facing jail time after speaking out about the conditions imposed on asylum seekers during his stay in Nauru. He reported, "There is no privacy from neighbours and less from guards, who can enter tents unannounced at any time." "It is hot all the time, it is dusty, with very poor facilities for washing." "They will limit the amount of time you're allowed in the shower to two to three minutes because of water shortages, and then there is this distance between the showers and the tents. I was shocked by how awful it was."

Personally the most shocking fact is that women like you and me are restricted on sanitary items as they are considered a 'fire hazard'. Isaacs also suggested that staff members are sent home after short periods of time to rest because "they become exhausted and develop mental health problems." I can only imagine the horrific issues that asylum seekers in these conditions have developed. The government says that these people are being processed to keep Australia safe but isn't it more dangerous having them develop mental conditions due to abuse that could be a danger to society? Personally I could not imagine living in these conditions, but hundreds of kids our age do and its inhumane. The monstrous treatment towards asylum seekers is unjust and immoral, and needs to be stopped. The Nauru files were over 2,000 leaked incident reports from detention camps totalling more than 8,000 pages. These incidents included accounts of assaults, sexual abuse, self harm, child abuse, and terrible living conditions endured by asylum seekers. Out of all of the reports 51.3% involved children. Children being abused sexually, physically and mentally. Children younger than you and I suffering every day at the hands of our government. And that is the worst part, the government is aware of this abuse of minors by other detainees and staff members and ignored the problem letting it continue. These incidents are horrible and include accounts of guards slapping young children to them allowing children an extra minute in the shower on the condition of them watching. The files included 59 reports of assault on children and 30 of self-

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harm involving children, one child even went as far as to slit her wrists with a pencil in class after continuous abuse from a guard. As a result of detention in Nauru being mandatory, the children that were detained were found to be affected by extreme levels of physical, emotional and psychological torment. Furthermore, offshore processing is undoubtedly expensive. One asylum seeker at Nauru immigration detention centre costs the government \$1,927 per day.

To put into perspective, it only costs \$394 a day to incarcerate a person and \$84 a day to give a child an education and \$38 a day for average housing per person. Taxpayers pay \$700,000 to keep a single asylum seeker on Nauru every year. Instead of using offshore detention centres, which costs lots of money, the government should find more risk-free alternatives so the taxpayers' money is not misused or wasted. Finally I would like to point out that refugees and asylum seekers are not the same thing. An asylum seeker is someone who is trying to prove that they are a refugee which means they had to leave their country due to life threatening circumstances. Yes, the government is locking up children in horrible conditions until they can prove their lives were in real danger.

I personally believe I would never get on a boat that has a low chance of surviving the trip to Australia, a country they know nothing about, unless my family and my life was in real danger. Australia needs to take a hard look at the facts, they clearly show the damage and danger these detention centres have on humans. It's evidently disgusting and appalling leaving children in these conditions. For those who've come across the seas we have boundless plains to share. Lets start sharing them and stop the inhumane mistreatment.

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