

Refugee week starts

19 June

Refugee bashing gains momentum again with Pauline Hanson tapping into the conservative uninformed Queensland electorate.

It distresses me that over 30,000 human beings, including about 4000 thousands children, are doomed by Coalition policy to indefinite visa uncertainty. It is sickening that some 2000 more languish offshore, in anguish about their future and reunion with loved ones. Labor has confronted its inhumanity, and says it will abolish temporary visas for all “boatpeople” who are refugees, and let them get on with a new life.

We don't have big public protests here in Brisbane. But many offshore detention industry workers live here, and the increasing number of sick refugees and asylum seekers in medical care and hospitals here, only increase. FIFO workers' families and friends also know about unsafe and demoralising living conditions for men women and children sent to Nauru and Manus by successive Governments. Thankfully, social media underpins our democracy and punches holes in the official blanket of operational secrecy and challenges official intimidation. The independent media has yet to be permitted to talk to asylum seekers face to face and A Current Affair is expected to whitewash the suffering of men women and children on Nauru.

The latest gut wrenching report “Protection Denied, Abuse Condoned: Women on Nauru at Risk” into human rights abuses documents the horror of our asylum seeker deterrence policy. The evidence presented leaves no room for doubt, and some of the victims of rape, assault and neglect whose names we know, remain in medical care, here.

Please vote to end the Australian sponsored persecution and deprivation of innocent human beings abandoned on Nauru and also on Manus Island (PNG), and also of proven refugees and grant them humanitarian settlement. I can't tell you how damaging the effect is of the gross and deliberate inhumanity of this policy on my friends, my whole community.

Frederika E Steen AM (former Immigration officer)