

The Politics of Anguish

Sent to: SMH/editor (letters@smh.com.au)

16 June 2016

As refugee bashing gains momentum, disgust grows in “my” conservative community.

More than 30 000 human beings, including thousands of children, are doomed to indefinite visa uncertainty by the major parties, and over 2 000 more languish offshore, in anguish about their future and reunion with family.

There are no big public protests here in Brisbane, but many offshore detention industry workers live here, and the number of sick refugees and asylum seekers in medical care and hospitals here, only increase. FIFO workers’ families and friends undoubtedly know about unsafe and demoralising living conditions for men women and children sent to Nauru and Manus by successive Governments. Thankfully, social media sustains our democracy and punches holes in the official blanket of operational secrecy and challenges official intimidation, even as News Ltd Courier Mail maintains its silence or selectively distorts the evidence.

Very telling is the reporting about the latest gut wrenching report “Protection Denied, Abuse Condoned: Women on Nauru at Risk” which documents the horror of our illegal asylum seeker deterrence policy. The evidence presented leaves no room for doubt, and some of the victims of rape, assault and neglect remain in medical care, here. Yet the Queensland Courier Mail has not told the people of Queensland.

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

Frederika E Steen AM (former Immigration officer)