

Letter to Premier Anastacia Palaszczuk.

July 1, 2020

Dear Premier.

A friend of mine tells me that the Queensland Police Union runs the state. I'm not falling for that. You're the boss, so I reckon the officer was speaking for you when she stopped me from attending the rally a few weeks ago, using COVID-19 as the excuse. Intimidated by the threat of a \$1,400 fine, I stayed away from the next two rallies. When I saw that those rallies were allowed to proceed, I figured you had just been testing the water, so I returned.

These rallies were different to those I am used to. They are organised by young people, which I find heartening.

Men in the Kangaroo Point 'alternate place of detention' are in indefinite detention, and have been for more than seven years. This is a breach of human rights by federal politicians, both Coalition and Labor. These men, and the detainees in Australia and overseas, are political prisoners.

Is it party loyalty, or presumed electoral advantage, that caused you to order the police action on Sunday last?

The action taken on the previous weekend, to clear Main Street, was fair enough, but left protesters in no doubt that you did not support their cause. Their cause is justice. A Tamil man who lives in Brisbane was kept in immigration detention for fourteen years! So breaching human rights in this country is not new, but who knew? Some politicians, no doubt.

Justified, no doubt. The Sri Lankan government labelled the Tamils who fought for freedom against the Sri Lankan army, 'terrorists'. Peter Dutton is going to send the terrorist family who were living in Biloela, back to Sri Lanka.

More than 300,000 Australians have signed a petition asking the government to let them stay, but they remain locked up, on Christmas Island. This isn't Peter Dutton. This is the Coalition's 'main game' to get re-elected, but federal Labor still hasn't figured it out. But I digress.

Last Sunday night, both police and protesters came looking for a fight. If that's not what you wanted, you'd better have a chat to QPS leadership.

The protesters know that their best chance of generating publicity, and hence promote their cause, is to provoke the authorities. On Sunday, they chose to block a minor road, and the police responded as required.

There was no need for violence. The protesters would have left of their own accord, if the police had made it clear that they were not going to act 'as required'. Half a dozen police at most, to keep everybody safe, would have sufficed at that point. Protesters are nice people. They'd have allowed access for any locals who needed it. Very few people would have suffered any inconvenience.

Instead, it was quite a spectacle. Blue lights flashing. People being dragged into police vans. People being searched. Lots of chanting, and cheering, and police baiting. Traffic reduced to one-way one-lane for a time on Main Street. I'm sure both sides were happy with the result.

Anyway I've had an idea. Federal Labor politicians are hopelessly compromised on this issue of human rights. This violation is occurring on your turf. You have the chance to save Labor from the misjudgments of your federal colleagues. Call for justice for refugees, and as a first step, demand that people in indefinite immigration detention in Queensland be transferred to community detention. I, for one, would be happy to host one of those men. I'd be surprised if others would not help if asked.

Yours sincerely,
Roy Hives.

Bio: Roy Hives

I was a Labor member when it was socialist, before Bob Hawke. Then I resigned. Cleaner, engineering technician, Army Reserve Officer, Maths/Science teacher, Degree in Social Science, TAFE volunteer English language home tutor, RAC (Qld) member. 20 years involvement with refugees. Spent months in Eritrea with friends. Also visited Swiss and German refugee communities. I've had a life-long interest in military history.

Context

This letter was written during, and in support of, the Community Blockade at the Kangaroo Point Hotel & Apartments in Main Street, Kangaroo Point, Brisbane, Qld. The hotel is currently being used as an Alternative Place of Detention (APOD) by the Australian Border Force. About 120 men have been indefinitely detained there after being transferred from offshore detention for medical treatment under the short-lived Medevac Bill. The bill was repealed by the LNP government in December 2019.

More information

[Medevac repeal bill passes after Jacqui Lambie makes 'secret deal' with Coalition](#)

[Medevac's been repealed. What does that mean for asylum seekers on Manus, Nauru?](#)

[Protesters arrested after efforts to block refugee transfers](#)

[The Kangaroo Point Blockade: An Interview With Refugee Solidarity's Dane De Leon](#)

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