

ACTION ALERT AA15-2A: UPDATE ON IMMIGRATION DETENTION CENTRES

The original Action Alert can be found on www.quakers.org.au Follow the link from Quakers in Action to Quaker Peace and Legislation Committee.

Senate Committee Report

On 5 June 2015 the Senate Legal and Constitutional Affairs Committee reported on the *Migration Amendment (Maintaining Good Order of Immigration Detention Facilities) Bill*. The committee recommended that the Bill be passed subject to several recommendations (a) to cover situations where detainees are in transit between locations, and (b) to clarify that the use of force is a measure of last resort and not a method of punishment.

In a dissenting report, ALP senators sought to delay passage of the Bill to enable consideration of further amendments covering the use of force by detention officers, as recommended by the Human Rights Commission and Law Council of Australia.

The Greens dissented because the Bill confers “excessive immunities and powers upon authorized officers without adequate safeguards”. The recommended rejection of the Bill, and that the Migration Act be amended to allow media access to detention centres.

Details of the committee report are available on the following website:
www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Committees/Senate

Note: In the Action Alert, the following points were raised for Friends to consider in any lobbying:

- The legislation appears to be a security-focused reaction to some specific incidents rather than a comprehensive response to the basic challenge of mandatory detention for asylum seekers.
- The Government seems more concerned to distance itself from the behaviour of the contractors than to seek humane solutions to the needs of asylum seekers held for long periods.
- The powers being proposed are greater than those available to police.

- The impact of the legislation is likely to reinforce the secrecy surrounding the operation of detention facilities by reducing the opportunity for the contractors and their staff being held to account legally.
- The fact that the legislation does not cover Nauru or Manus Island centres leaves unresolved the issues arising from serious incidents in those places.

QPLC will be pleased to learn of action taken on this matter, and will monitor the progress of the legislation.

Canberra

June 2015