**Pre-Budget Submission**

Thank you for the opportunity to submit to the process of Budget deliberations.

Grandmothers for Refugees is a large and growing movement that advocates for fair treatment of asylum seekers and refugees.

We grandmothers look to responsible building of the nation that the young generation will experience, and for a healthy future Australian society. We urge against the deliberate creation of a second tier of non-citizens through short-term visas and restrictions on access to work, health, income, justice and education etc. <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2019-12-refugees-insecure-visas-trauma-depression.html> The talent and bravery of so many contemporary refugees would enhance our nation as is already our national experience.

Since mandatory detention was introduced in 1992, it has become a ‘devil’s playground’, in which fear and punishment are leveraged to the detriment of asylum seekers. It damages the notion of the fair society that Australia had some claim upon. Public miseducation, secrecy and unaccountable contracts are the equipment of this ‘playground’. <https://www.auspsa.org.au/sites/default/files/twenty_years_of_mandatory_detention_adele_garnier_and_lloyd_cox.pdf>

Wilful policy blindness to the causes of the various waves of refugees underlies the ‘border security’ message which has been used to create fear in our society and draw us away from our international obligations. Refugees cannot be a threat to our ‘borders’ – they arrive unarmed in search of safety, having fled various horrors. To promote the false message of fear, billions of public dollars have been spent in the past seven years detaining a small number of men, women and children offshore

<http://theconversation.com/penny-wise-pound-foolish-how-to-really-save-money-on-refugees-27270>

The human suffering of that cohort has been great, and the corruption of the systems that have enabled it is distasteful to say the least, negatively impacting governance in Nauru and PNG, and here in Australia. <https://www.anao.gov.au/work/performance-audit/offshore-processing-centres-nauru-and-papua-new-guinea-contract-management>

Offshore detention can be seen as an expensive, destructive and failed policy, damaging its victims, and working against civilised international norms of refugee rights. <https://www.kaldorcentre.unsw.edu.au/sites/default/files/Factsheet_Global%20Compacts_Jan191.pdf> Offshore detention locates us as a pariah nation, damaging and further corrupting the host countries, thus further diminishing Australia’s regional standing. <https://www.newsweek.com/australias-treatment-desperate-refugees-will-make-it-pariah-nation-393817> Offshore detention recycles our origins as a penal colony and turns its back on the more successful settler society of the 20th century that aimed to be well-organised, well-educated and future focussed. Offshore detention needs to be brought to a rapid close, as does punitive onshore detention. **This alone will save the budget billions of dollars.**

The fundamental factors that create refugees are failed governance and climate change. Strong policy foundations and practice are necessary in both of these areas for a healthy society. Australia has the knowledge and resources to be a world leader in both good governance and environmental protection, yet it is sadly falling short in national stewardship of public resources in both these areas while ‘over-investing’ in indefinite unnecessary detention of a tiny proportion of the world’s refugees. <https://www.kaldorcentre.unsw.edu.au/sites/default/files/Factsheet_Cost%20of%20Australias%20asylum%20and%20refugee%20policy_Dec2019.pdf>

There are other and better policy approaches that could be taken given serious discussion, including discussion of the implications of population displacement as a result of global warming. <https://phys.org/news/2019-06-million-refugees-world-solutions-problem.html>

<https://www.g20-insights.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/Building_Global_Governance_Climate_Refugees.pdf>

Grandmothers for Refugees urges our government to re-order its budget priorities in order to:

* respect our international UN obligations
* protect what we have long understood to be our national “social contract” – a stable public service, a fair tax system, support for our complex multicultural society, respect and support for our Pacific neighbours, the need to husband and protect our fragile environment, respect and support for our first people – and to support the best global institutional endeavours for a more peaceful future
* stop allocating funds for the inhumane and costly (to both victims and perpetrators) detention and demonisation of refugees and people seeking asylum.

These elements are essential to a healthy future society for us and our young people and would allow Australia to afford to play a much-needed leadership role in the world as a modern nation.