



Andrew Wilkie MP
INDEPENDENT MEMBER FOR CLARK

29 MAY 2020

The Hon Scott Morrison MP
Prime Minister
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Prime Minister

The Australian Government's treatment of asylum seekers, in both onshore and offshore detention, continues to be cruel and inhumane. It is also a waste of taxpayers' money.

Indeed at the time we are facing the largest budget deficit in Australian history, the Government is spending tens of millions of dollars on the unnecessary and illegal detention of asylum seekers. This does not even include the estimated \$9 billion outlaid between 2016 and 2020 for Australia's offshore detention policies. I have already raised with the Minister for Home Affairs the madness of detaining the Tamil family on Christmas Island, for example, which has cost taxpayers a reported \$27 million.

The Minister for Home Affairs has rejected a proposal by a coalition of community sector organisations to house and support up to 1,400 onshore detainees in Australia on Bridging E Visas. The community sector offered to deliver housing, medical and financial support to these people for approximately \$60,000 per person per year, which would be significantly less than the cost of their current detention which, I understand, is approximately \$350,000 per person per year. The release of these detainees, as well as the Tamil family on Christmas Island, would in fact save the Government over \$430 million per year.

The human and financial cost of Australia's asylum seeker policy is shocking and nonsensical. I ask you to urgently review this spending and seriously consider the enclosed proposal from the community sector.

Yours sincerely

Andrew Wilkie MP
Independent Member of Clark