



COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES



**HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**  
**MATTERS OF PUBLIC IMPORTANCE**

**National Security**

**SPEECH**

**Wednesday, 29 May 2013**

BY AUTHORITY OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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## SPEECH

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**Speaker** Morrison, Scott, MP

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**Mr MORRISON** (Cook) (16:14): We have seen this afternoon an attempt by the government and the crossbenchers to delay getting to this matter of public importance because they would rather talk about anything than their own failures in national security. National security is the poor policy cousin within this government. That has been on display today as we have just seen. It has been on display by this Prime Minister when she was Deputy Prime Minister and did not go to National Security Committee meetings, instead sending her bodyguard. Perhaps, when we have been seeking to ask questions of the Prime Minister on these national security matters, given she is unable to understand the questions let alone answer them, we should submit those questions in writing to her bodyguard.

Also, we have seen the Prime Minister today deride the opposition for putting national security on the agenda in this place and holding her government to account for their failures on serious national security matters. This Prime Minister, talking about national security, said the opposition was taking the low road. That is her assessment of having a discussion and a debate and, most importantly, being held to account on national security matters. I think this speaks volumes about the Prime Minister's sense of the importance she places on these matters within her government. National security is just descended in the pecking order of issues that should be under the attention of this government.

There is no greater responsibility of any national government than national security and if the Prime Minister does not believe that that is a topic—national security that she should be asked questions about in this parliament—then she is in the wrong job. But later this year the Australian people will have the opportunity to remedy that. They can put a government in place that will make national security a top priority, as it should be for every national government.

The Prime Minister is oblivious—I think because of her ignorance of these matters and her lack of appreciation of their importance—of the impact and damage that is being done by her own policies. That is no greater than in the area of this Prime Minister's own failings on border protection policy. No area of failure better demonstrates how this government does not work, how their policies do not work, than the impact of their policies on Australia's national security interests.

Every month, more than 3,000 people are turning up illegally by boat to this country—an average of over 2,000 per month this financial year—up from an average of just two per month when Labor came to government all those years ago. Twenty-three thousand people who arrived illegally by boat are now in the system in detention or somewhere else. Nineteen thousand are yet to even be processed, have their asylum applications received or assessed—19,000. By the time we get to the election in September of this year it is likely that we will have in the vicinity of 30,000 people in the system, the vast majority of whom—likely to be over 25,000—will have not had any assessments done on their claims whatsoever. What a legacy caseload that will leave to whoever forms government after the next election! That is no surprise, but I will come to that later.

This government has form on dumping the problems that they cause in one term and passing them off to the other side of an election. Fourteen-and-a-half thousand visas have been denied to people applying offshore in some of the worst places you can imagine because under this government visas have been given to people who arrived illegally by boat. More than 6,000 children have come on boats under this government's policy—a record. And, of course, the record blow-outs in costs have sucked the resources from our national security agencies, whether they be the Australian Federal Police, ASIO, Customs—my colleagues will talk about that today, I am sure. These have gone from \$85 million in immigration alone—that is where it started in 2007-08—to \$3 billion on these matters in the budget a few weeks ago for immigration.

**Mr Hunt:** How much?

**Mr MORRISON:** Three thousand million dollars—with blow-outs since 2009-10 of more than \$10 billion, and counting and running. Labor's failures here have crashed the detention network—totally crashed it. That was in evidence again last night on the 7:30 program when we were reminded of those incidents on Christmas Island and reminded also of what followed at Villawood. The detention network under this government has become chaotic because, prior to the last election, the then minister, Senator Evans, ignored advice after advice of brewing tension within the detention network. He decided to do nothing, not to expand the detention network, and pushed decisions off to the other side of the election. By the time his successor, Minister Bowen, came to the job it was all too late. Night followed day, and riots followed the inaction of this government.

You might want to understand what happened to those who were involved in those riots, and those who seek to act up, to get a bit of a sense of this government's commitment to national security matters. Minister Bowen said that there had been 'hundreds' of people involved in those riots. He spoke tough at the press conference, saying that the government would use not just the criminal character provisions of section 501 of the immigration act to come down toughly on these people but also the general provisions. You would think out of hundreds of people that this government might have got tough.

This is what happened: of several hundred of those who were involved, 22 were charged and seven were convicted. Of the seven persons convicted, four are in the community having been granted a protection visa—that is pretty tough—one is in the community on a bridging visa E, one is in the community on a removal pending bridging visa, and one has been removed from Australia. Just one person was denied a protection visa because of their involvement and conviction as a result of those riots. Just one! That gives a pretty good idea of where this government sits when it comes to those matters.

After grinding the detention network into the ground and filling it to the brim, this government's next step was to just let people out, not because of any great doubt and compassion, which the government members might pretend when they go to their branch meetings, but because it was full. Left with no other option, in their view, and certainly they were unwilling to countenance the return to the Howard government's measures, they decided simply to let people out.

Since the decision of the government to let people out into the community—at the time they let them out with work rights although we warned the government if they let them out with work rights that would make a bad situation worse—we have gone from an average rate of arrivals over the four years prior to that of 288 per month to now an average of over 1,600 per month. That is what happens when the government decides to continue to weaken the measures and arrangements that are put in place to protect our borders and our national security.

Labor's bridging visa policy is a dumping policy. It is not a compassionate policy. This government is just dumping people into the community, out of sight, out of mind, with virtually no thought attached to that process. People are just dumped out there because there is nowhere else to put them. You might think if you are going to let people out into the community you should probably find out who they are and you should probably find out whether they are a security risk to Australia. In May 2012 in Senate estimates Senator Cash asked a series of questions about how people are assessed before they are released on bridging visas. Senator Cash said:

Do they have preliminary ASIO security clearance?

Mr Moorhouse, one of the deputy secretaries, said:

Whilst I do not want to go into detail ... if we are looking at a temporary or bridging visa for a person—

this is in relation to the ASIO assessment in his words, not mine—

it is a lighter touch.

There are light-touch ASIO assessments for those released into the community under this government because the detention centres are full. They would be in detention centres, as single adult males—and the Minister for Immigration and Citizenship would know this. They would be in detention and not in the community, single adult males who had arrived illegally by boat, if the government had not so badly stuffed up on the borders and let them be overrun and let our detention centres fill to the brim. Being forced into the situation of letting people out, the ASIO assessment that is provided is a 'light touch'. Mr Irvine from ASIO, who was questioned on these matters, said, 'We check the name against our records.' If someone gives a false name, has a false identity, and

they provide that name then that is the check, that is how it is done. That is the light-touch ASIO protection of national security under this government's policies. When you go to the other end of the process—that is only if the government has even referred the matter to ASIO through DIAC—you have DIAC officers making a preliminary assessment as well, based on what has never been precisely clear. We have a light-touch ASIO assessment of people who are put out into the community.

Why is this a problem for those who have come illegally by boat? Why does this pose a greater risk? I wonder if the government is aware of these figures. Between 2010-11 and 2012-13, the average rate of negative assessments and qualified assessments of people who came by boat as opposed to people who did not come by boat was 20 times higher. The chance of someone getting a qualified or negative ASIO assessment if they have come by boat, as opposed to the other assessments that ASIO conducts through the immigration process is 20 times higher.

You would think with that type of rate, 20 times greater risk, regardless of the actual incidence, you would put a bit more care into the decision and the process. But as usual this government decides to do what it wants to do and does not think through its actions or the consequences. At the end of the day we all end up paying for it one way or the other.

This is a government that has had a litany of these issues, whether it is Captain Emad who we in this place all remember well. He continues to roam around the world, courtesy of this government. He was let in as a people smuggler and then let out as a people smuggler, with agencies not even speaking to each other and probably ministers not even speaking to each other. Then we have the case of Sayed Ali. When we asked the DIAC officials about him, they know nothing. They do not know anything about this bloke, despite the fact that he was reported in the Australian media. Then we have the red notice issued against a suspected terrorist who was held in a low-security detention facility in Inverbrackie. Then we have the Sri Lankan accused of murdering his girlfriend who was put on a bridging visa under this government. Then we have those who are charged with serious criminal offences and are waiting to go to court, and this minister leaves them in the community. He leaves them in the community with serious criminal charges pending to be addressed in the courts.

This government's attitude and approach to our borders betray a lack of interest. When it comes to our borders and when it comes to our national security, this government's heart is just not in it. It is not serious enough for this government. It is not a core issue. It is not the reason the government is here. It would seem members of the government are here for other reasons. They are certainly not here to protect our borders and they are certainly not here to put national security as the key and first priority of the national government. That is something the Prime Minister has demonstrated and it is something this government has demonstrated by its own actions.

There is an alternative to all of that, and that alternative sits on this side of this House. That alternative is represented by a party that will put back the measures that worked and that this government has rejected. It is an alternative that will actually use section 91W of the Migration Act to deny an outcome for people who we reasonably believe have discarded their documentation. They will not get the benefit of the doubt under a coalition government, but they do under this government. They do under this government because that is this government's view, and the Australian people know it. That is why we have seen myriad failed solutions from this government, whether it is the East Timor solution or the Malaysian people swap.

I note that at Senate estimates DIAC has confirmed that the Malaysian government has given no indication that it will support the Houston panel recommendations in relation to your own agreement. The Malaysian people swap in its current form has been rejected by the Houston panel. The Malaysian government does not sign up to the change they recommended, so the Malaysian people swap is an excuse to do nothing under this government. This government will do nothing other than blame everyone else for its own lack of interest in national security issues. The solution people are looking for in border protection and national security is an election solution, and it comes on 14 September. *(Time expired)*