



COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES



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

**Asylum Seekers**

**SPEECH**

**Tuesday, 18 September 2012**

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) (15:29): It was only a small boat that illegally entered Australia's waters last night but it was a very significant one indeed because it marked the 25,000th person to have illegally entered Australia on 427 boats under this government—more than 25,000 people. It was just a boat with a small number of people on board. Interestingly, I note that the statement issued by the Minister for Home Affairs on 17 September differed somewhat from the one issued the day before. A statement on 16 September about a boat carrying 70 people said 'people arriving by boat without a visa after 13 August 2012 run the risk of transport to a regional processing country'. Interestingly, the statement of 17 September no longer carried that statement. They do not seem to be able to keep the policy straight on that side of the House from one day to the next, which is no great surprise.

More than 25,000 people have now arrived illegally in Australia on 427 boats under this government. With every boat arrival representing another policy failure—according not to me but to the now Prime Minister herself—this is a record of failure without peer. And it is a record of failure that continues unabated to this day. More than 5,000 people have arrived this financial year—a year where the Treasurer based his budget on just 5,400 arrivals. If there is anybody who has a hide, it is the Treasurer. He comes into this place and refuses to answer legitimate questions about where his budget is going—that is, south and in a hurry—and where the money is going to come from for promise after promise after promise as this government governs like there was no yesterday and there is no tomorrow, leaving others to pay the bill for the endless commitments.

The Treasurer today refused to answer the critical question: where is the money coming from for the further budget blow-out from this government on their border protection failures? The budget blow-out so far is over \$5 billion in the last three years. Just how much greater will that blow-out be when they bring out the MYEFO and yet again it reveals a budget that is completely out of control due principally to the failures on our borders?

More than 10,000 people have arrived in 2012, the biggest year of illegal arrivals on record, and more than two-thirds of the arrivals have occurred since the last election. At the last election the Leader of the Opposition, Tony Abbott, said, 'We will stop the boats.' The effect of electing the government again after some 17 days was to start the boats again. Not only have the boats started again under this government, but it has gone into hyperdrive since the 2007 election. The people of Australia were given the opportunity to choose at the last election. The government was returned, and more than two-thirds of the 25,000 arrivals under this government have turned up since the last election. There are more than 10,000 people currently in the system, feeding into the endless appeals network set up by the government. That will drag on and cause cost for many years to come.

I notice once again that the Minister for Immigration and Citizenship is not at the table and my friend and colleague the member for Blaxland, the Minister for Home Affairs, has been brought in as the sub to represent him. Perhaps the minister for immigration is out looking for Captain Emad! I have got some news for him about where Captain Emad is later in my remarks. The minister complained in a press conference this morning that nothing he does makes me happy. I am touched by the minister's apparent desire to please—almost as touched as the member for Griffith, the former Prime Minister, is grateful for the minister for immigration's desire to please him! I acknowledge that the minister for immigration has had very little success when it comes to keeping me happy on these matters. When it comes to what this government has been offering on border protection he is actually right: I am not happy, Chris; I am not happy, Julia. I am not happy about 25,000 people illegally entering Australia on boats. I am not happy that more than 1,000 people are dead and more than 8,000 people have been denied visas seeking our protection who have applied offshore—

**Mr Champion:** Mr Deputy Speaker, on a point of order: the member for Cook well knows that he should use people's titles rather than their names.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Hon. BC Scott): The member for Cook will refer to members by their title.

**Mr MORRISON:** I am not happy about how this government and, in particular, this minister have been dragged kicking and screaming to the table on offshore processing only to implement the offshore processing policy in a half-hearted way. Not one person coming on a boat from Indonesia has so far been sent to Nauru by this government. But they maintain that they are sending a strong message up into Indonesia. Rather than seek to intercept vessels coming from Sri Lanka outside of our waters and working with the government of Sri Lanka for their safe return, they have opted to use the few places available so far on Nauru for Sri Lankan arrivals. The minister has still refused to say what the appeals process will be on Nauru and whether they will provide access to the Australian courts, giving vague and ambiguous responses to questions both from journalists and from members of this side at the same time.

I welcome, though, a development just lately: it has been confirmed that processing will now be done under Nauruan jurisdiction. But last week the Nauruan foreign minister said it would be done initially under Australian jurisdiction. I did not make that up. Those were the words of Dr Kieren Keke, who said that initially the processing would be done under Australian jurisdiction. That is exactly what he said. The minister has so far still not committed to also applying the universality principle to offshore processing on Nauru. There is no indication that all those who seek to come to Australia on illegal boats will be sent to Nauru.

When you decide to implement someone else's policies, you really should read the instruction manual. That is what you really should do. This government clearly has not read the instruction manual as to how you implement successful border protection policies. Instead, this government continues to make up those rules and policies on the run as it goes along. Labor's reluctant and half-hearted decision to restore offshore processing on Nauru is, frankly, not enough. Labor is operating on a one-legged-stool policy on Nauru, and they should not be surprised when that stool falls over.

The minister and this Prime Minister have the highest policy failure rate on illegal arrivals by boat on record. Despite their unprecedented failure, the government continue to refuse to acknowledge they got it wrong, accept responsibility for getting it wrong and the consequences that flow from that and, most importantly, put it right by restoring the measures that worked. The coalition has consistently argued for the full suite of measures that most effectively worked under the coalition to be restored. That is why we moved amendments in this House and the other place on two occasions to restore the policies of temporary protection visas and turning boats back where it is safe to do so. Those motions, both in this place and in the other place, on two occasions have been voted against consistently by the government. If Labor persist with their half-hearted approach on border protection and continue to refuse to restore the Howard government policies, they cannot expect Howard government outcomes. They cannot expect that.

If they break Nauru by continuing to take this half-hearted approach, they own it and they own the failures that go with it. They should not expect to come into this place and seek support for their past failed policies simply because they cannot read the instruction manual as to how you do offshore processing correctly and how you restore measures that worked under the previous government—and they are seeking constant excuses for not restoring those measures.

The problem, at the end of the day, is not just the government's failed policies; it is the government themselves. This government is a soft touch. Labor is a soft touch when it comes to border protection. They remain—this government, the Labor Party—a stronger pull factor for boats to come to Australia than any of the measures and any of the matters that have gone before it. This is because they just do not follow through. Of course they do not believe in it. But even when they are forced to the table they never follow through. Remember, it was the Minister for Immigration and Citizenship who threatened those participating in the Christmas Island riots with using the character test to deny their visas, saying:

I take the character test very, very seriously. One of the tests is if somebody is imprisoned for 12 months or more. There is a more general test, which simply goes to somebody's conduct and general conduct, and whether that indicates they are of bad character. I will be examining those matters very, very seriously.

My question to the minister for immigration is: how many of the hundreds of people who were involved in the Christmas Island riots have been denied visas by that minister? The answer is none. Then there were the minister's further threats after the riots at Villawood. He said:

As I said in relation to Christmas Island, I will be applying the character test to those who may have been involved in this incident and I'll be applying it vigorously.

Again to the minister for immigration I ask: how many of the hundreds of people who were involved in the Villawood riots that saw buildings burnt to the ground have been denied visas under those tests by the minister for immigration? The answer, again, is none. That is not surprising, though, because this is the same minister who refused to get rioting protestors off a roof for 11 days, yet the New South Wales police could get rioting protestors off his own roof in 2½ hours.

This was the minister who allowed Captain Emad to have a protection visa while he was being investigated for his involvement in people smuggling and then cancelled his visa, months after he left, shaking his fist into the wind as he was someplace else. We found out where Captain Emad is, I am pleased to report. We have found Captain Emad. Captain Emad is in Iraq—interestingly, the place which this government said he was fleeing persecution from. That is the standard when it comes to this government and their record. Not only that, but his alleged widow and orphaned children, who all claimed that Captain Emad was dead, are all here today on permanent visas months and months later.

This is the minister, also, who said he was going to implement the Prime Minister's policy to open a regional processing centre in East Timor. This is the minister who said he was going to send people to Malaysia before it even worked out an agreement with the government of Malaysia, only to have the whole thing fall over in the High Court after an injunction was lodged because he was unable to deliver on his own failed policy to transfer people there within three days. He could not even get the instructions on his own policy right, and he tripped over it.

This is the same minister who most recently sat on his hands while Taji Mustafa, the UK leader of Hizb ut-Tahrir, an organisation that has condoned the killing of Australian soldiers in Afghanistan and called for the military destruction of Israel, entered Australia. Then he refused to lift a finger even to inquire whether his visa should be cancelled. Given the minister's failing to act on rioting detainees burning down our detention centres and his refusal to even consider cancelling the visa of the UK leader of Hizb ut-Tahrir, I have no doubt why the Australian people have no confidence in his most recent claim to take action against any noncitizens involved in the violent and extreme riots that took place in Sydney on the weekend.

The problem with this government is that when it comes to border security they just cannot be believed. They are not taken seriously. One only needs to look at their record to understand that. They are seen as a soft touch. They always have an excuse for doing nothing. They always have an excuse as to why you cannot do this and why you cannot do that. The net result is that they do nothing. But excuses do not stop boats. Excuses do not secure our borders.

Today it is very important that this House debates this matter because, as each day passes, as each day this government take their half-hearted approach—where they have been dragged kicking and screaming to implement a policy that they cannot even implement correctly—the people smugglers continue to have one over this government. That is why the Australian people know that, if they want to stop the boats, the only way to do that is to change the government. *(Time expired)*