



COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

BILLS

**Migration Legislation Amendment (Offshore
Processing and Other Measures) Bill 2011**

Second Reading

SPEECH

Wednesday, 15 August 2012

BY AUTHORITY OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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Date Wednesday, 15 August 2012
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Questioner
Speaker Katter, Bob, MP

Source House
Proof No
Responder
Question No.

Mr KATTER (Kennedy) (12:37): In rising to say a few words on the Migration Legislation Amendment (Offshore Processing and Other Measures) Bill 2011, my remarks are coloured by the fact that the last time I was in this House listening to this debate a number of the Liberal and National Party members were crying, wiping tears away from their eyes. I have raised in this House probably 100 times the farm deaths in Australia. Every four days in Australia a farmer commits suicide. I cannot remember a single occasion on which a member of the ALP or the LNP raised this issue or commented upon it, except to question my figures which were ABS figures. Why did they not cry about their own people in Australia? They must know some of these people. To cry about someone in the abstract when you cannot cry a tear in sympathy for your own Australian people leaves one with the impression that we are dealing with hypocrisy on a grand scale. In addition, the opposition have a solution—the Malaysian solution. They are absolutely determined to play politics with that solution.

I am not going to act as though I am an angel of morality. In fact, in my first vote I was heavily influenced by political considerations. It does not give me great joy to admit that in this place. Clearly, if a refugee, a self-smuggler, paying money to get into this country, knows he is going to end up in Malaysia, he ain't going to pay the money or get on the boat. So the Malaysia solution clearly is what should be being done. It is an absolute disgrace and a reflection upon the 60 or 70 hypocrites to my right here in this parliament that none of them have made a move in that direction.

When I say that, I would have to include myself in the first round of voting. At least I can say that I have since woken up to myself and seen the overwhelming power of the argument for the Malaysia solution. There is merit in the Liberal remarks that it may not stand up for a great period, but when they are coming in at the rate of 200 a week, then I would think every week that we buy is very important. Clearly, that is the direction in which we should be travelling.

As for those Greens, I think we can safely say that after the next two elections there will be no Greens left in the parliaments of Australia. Clearly, the Australian people have realised what they are dealing with there. The forces of political consideration, when hundreds of people are drowning every month, override human lives and the considerations of this country, which brings me to the nub of what we are talking about here.

Countries in the Middle East that spawn terrorism are not happy places to live at the best of times. They are highly restrictive and oppressive societies in most cases, and they are dangerous societies in most cases. Most of all, they are poor. The people live in grinding poverty. Average incomes are \$3,500 a year; ours are nearly \$2,000 a week. If people living in a country where their income is \$3,500 a year can get into a country where, with a wife and two kids, they do not even work—they go on unemployment benefits—and they will get \$50,000 a year, it seems to them to be a pretty good arrangement, particularly if they are staying with relatives in Sydney—in a lot of cases on a freebie. Australia has created the world's greatest magnet for refugees. Australia pays welfare of \$50,000 a year to families who come from countries where their income would have been \$3,500.

You may need proof of what I am saying, that these people are not genuine refugees. The 250,000 people in Malaysia are most certainly genuine refugees because they just fled across the border to get away from persecution—Buddhist and Christian people, the Karen. They fled across the border to Malaysia and there is no question that they are genuine refugees. But if you are a refugee fleeing from the western end of the Middle East, why have you not gone to Azerbaijan, to Kazakhstan, to Afghanistan, to Pakistan or to Sri Lanka? There are 20 countries to which you would have gone if you were a genuine refugee—to the nearest country, as did the Karen. All refugees flee to the nearest country. These people are not genuine refugees. They are going past 15 or 20 countries where they would be culturally at ease, not going to a country that is enormously different. Why are they doing that? I can give you 50,000 reasons why they are doing that.

They say, 'What are my chances of getting into Australia? Under the Liberals, I had a two in three chance of getting into Australia. I knew if I could get on a boat that out of the three of us two would get into Australia.

So I will just jump onto the next boat.' They knew they could get into Australia under the Liberals. It has been infinitely easier to get into Australia under the ALP. The ALP have put up one solution, which is vastly superior to anything else put on the table to date, and they have now retreated to a solution which, it would seem to me, is no solution at all. It is just a reassertion of the 'get into Australia any time you like' policy.

The Leader of the Opposition, Mr Abbott, has said that they will not come in under an Abbott government.

If I were a betting man, I know which way I would be betting and I would not be betting on Tony winning that one—but God bless him for trying. I do not think there is any way out of this, except for people to go to Malaysia or except to say, 'If you get on a boat, I am sorry but you will not set foot on Australian soil. You will stay out there.' I do not have time to be arguing the legalities of these situations, suffice to say my government in Queensland got Mabo wrong—they paid \$23 million to lawyers and they got it wrong. My recommendations to cabinet got it right, so I like to think I know a little bit about the law.

I will not go into the constitutionality of saying, 'You got on the boat—that was your decision, it wasn't our decision, and you can't say by getting on that boat "You will now take me into Australia". No, I'm sorry, you got on the boat; you stay on the boat,' but as far as I am concerned we have a responsibility to look after them on the boat, but they stay on the boat. That means that they know they cannot get into Australia. Under Liberal Party policy they know they can get into Australia; under ALP policy they know they can get into Australia. They are mugs if they do not have a go. Our best migrants have been the Sikhs; I have immense admiration for them and I have studied their religion. They come to Australia and they are instant Australians. They love this country. Some of my Sikh mates are saying, 'Listen, mate, they're doing it on an amateur scale. We're the professional boys; we'll be bringing ocean liners in. If this keeps up, we're climbing on board. We're going to be having ocean liners come in.' Knowing that mob, I am quite sure they will. I will probably be cheering them on.

That is a different situation altogether. The situation is enormously clear-cut: you know if you got on a boat under Liberal policies, for the 12 years they were there, or under ALP policies, you had every chance of becoming an Australian citizen and moving up from \$3,500 a year to \$50,000. If you are genuine, why didn't you go to a country where you would have felt at home? Why did you flee halfway round the world to get to Australia? Why did you do that? The reason is not that you are a refugee; the reason is that you are a self-smuggler. That is the reason. If we continue with an open-door policy, millions of people will flow through that open door. It is no use the Prime Minister saying that all who have come here would fit into the Melbourne Cricket Ground, because once you establish that you can get here and the door is open, you would be stupid not to come here. Once America opened its door, millions flocked into America. We have an open-door policy but with that policy we are doomed to become a country that will be dictated to by other people who come in whenever they feel like it.

The government will not disclose how much money this is costing, but it would seem to me—on the basis of costings coming out of prison systems and similar detention arrangements—that we are talking about thousands of millions of dollars a year. That is money that could be going to—let me be very crude and sanguine about it—struggling pensioners in Australia, who are paying the highest electricity charges in the world before the CO2 25 per cent comes in—the 25 per cent in the government's report. The public purse is finite; some of our socialist friends do not think it is, but it is. At the end of the day the public purse can either go to looking after self-smugglers, giving them a golden run, or it can be spent looking after Australian people. People who are coming in the front door and doing the right thing are lining up in huge queues. People who have been magnificent Australians—and I refer again to the Sikh communities—are not allowed in. Many of the self-smugglers are not anything like the people we want in this country. When I am staying overnight in a place like Brisbane, we cost out the motels and we get the cheapest ones. The last time we did it—about seven years ago—we got one for \$89 a night and we rejected another one for \$136 a night, and the one costing \$136 a night was the one that the refugees were in—\$136 a night per person plus food plus all of the other add-ons.

I think the people of Australia have a fair idea of what is going down here. I am just one person, but to the best of my ability I will be telling them on our social networking site, which is now running at 10,000 hits a day, that under the LNP two-thirds will get in and under the ALP over three-quarters will get in. With our policies, none will get in. If Tony Abbott were to deliver in not allowing any of those people to set foot on Australian soil—it will never happen, but if it did happen—I would be the first to applaud him. I certainly applaud him for putting up that idea. I do not applaud him for his hypocrisy on the Malaysia solution. There is no other word that I can use to describe what has taken place. It is simply playing politics and getting an outcome which is dreadful for our country.

The only answer to this is to say, 'No, you got on the boats, that was your choice. You stay on the boats. You don't have a right.' I have been over all of the documentation—the international agreements. In fact my nephew wrote a book on one of them—he is a prominent lawyer, Dominic Katter. There is no way in the world that we are bound to agreements that say, 'You will take everyone who wants to come into your country.' There is no way that any of those agreements say that, and yet that is what is occurring here. I cannot see how they can claim to be a refugee when they have gone past 20 countries, in which they would feel at home, to go to a country in which in every way they would feel extremely culturally foreign, and having taken great risks to get here as well. (*Time expired*)