



## Compassion and Common Sense has Prevailed Over Crass Political Opportunism

The passing of the Medevac Bill in the House of Representatives yesterday and its endorsement by the Senate today, has been welcomed by the Ethnic Communities Council of WA (ECCWA).

ECCWA President Ramdas Sankaran described it as a “historic victory of compassion and common sense over crass political opportunism”. He added that the desperate tactics of the Morrison government to undermine the adoption of the bill were despicable given the following:

1. Not releasing the advice from the Commonwealth Solicitor General, “that the proposal before the House of Representatives breached the constitution because amendments passed by the Senate last December increased expenditure from a standing appropriation in breach of section 53 until the day before the bill was debated; and asking the Speaker of the House, Tony Smith not to table it in parliament.
2. Not highlighting the fact that aforementioned legal advice also noted that it was the parliament and not the high court that was the final arbiter on the proposal which effectively meant that parliament had the discretion to chart its own course.
3. Hiding the fact that hundreds of asylum seekers had already been brought to Australia from Nauru and Manus Islands by the Coalition government without it leading to the People smugglers re-commencing their immoral trade.
4. The patently absurd claim that Australia’s border protection regime could not be adjusted without serious consequences when the bill was limited to **only** those **currently** on Nauru and Manus Islands.
5. Indulging in and promoting an inflammatory debate by referring to contingency plans being put into place to manage the “risks”, reopening of the Christmas Island Detention Centre, and other fear mongering attempts.
6. Ignoring the fact that the hundreds of asylum seekers that the USA agreed to resettle has not led to people smugglers recommencing their abhorrent trade.
7. Every asylum seeker that came to Australia using so called people smugglers knew exactly who they were and how to contact them. It is laughable that governments, both Coalition and ALP have not been able to do likewise and disrupt their despicable trade given the intelligence, military and other resources at its beck and call.”
8. If the Coalition and the ALP are serious about deaths at sea, what they need to adopt is a policy to “stop the boats leaving to Australia” & not one that turns unseaworthy boats around.”

“Points 3 and 6 make a mockery of the Government’s claim that Dr. Phelps bill “will compromise Australia’s border security, result in widespread arrivals, and embolden people smugglers.”

“Our Council shares the view that Dr. Phelps bill will help ensure that those seeking asylum in Australia will be provided with the appropriate level of healthcare, as deemed by trained and qualified medical professionals. Accordingly we thank her, the ALP, the Greens and those occupying the Cross Benches who supported the bill in the House of Representatives and the Senate for their courage and compassion” said Mr. Sankaran.

“The passing of the bill by both Houses is a timely reminder to the Coalition that Australian voters determine who should represent them in parliament and under what circumstances they would do so. Continuing to dog whistle rather than heed the wishes of the vast majority of Australians to treat asylum seekers humanely, will consign them to the opposition benches later this year.”

“The ALP has finally shown some ticker by departing from a hardline stance it shared with the Coalition by at least ensuring that people in offshore detention have access to proper medical treatment. Hopefully it will have the courage to dismantle off shore detention and explore regional solutions to keep our borders safe when it is returned to government” said Mr. Sankaran.

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