




Speech By
Mark Furner

MEMBER FOR FERNY GROVE

Record of Proceedings, 11 May 2016

MOTION: BORDER PROTECTION

 **Mr FURNER** (Ferny Grove—ALP) (6.14 pm): I rise to speak to the motion moved by the member for Everton. I believe that everyone in this chamber should realise that over the years governments of all persuasions have had to deal with this particular issue from as far back as the White Australia Policy. I believe that the immigration measures put in place by successive governments have led to a great nation that is built on the back of migrants. Of course, the only people in this chamber who cannot lay claim to that are the Indigenous members, as they are the true traditional owners of this land.

This afternoon when the member for Everton rose to raise this motion, I had a bit of a flashback. I felt that I was back in the Australian Senate, because from time to time we would deal with similar motions relating to immigration and those sorts of things. I really do not know whether the member was punch-drunk from losing his leadership aspirations in the party room or was wishing, like a few others opposite, that he had taken a tilt at federal politics.

Successive Labor governments have always approached the issue of immigration from a pragmatic and sensible perspective. It is an approach that is based on compassion, that works and that sends a clear message to people smugglers that as a party we will not tolerate their scurrilous trade in human misery. However, that has not always been the case for the conservative coalition. I reflect on my time in the Senate under the Liberal and National Party coalition.

In May 2011, the Gillard government announced plans to address the issue of asylum seekers arriving by boat with an asylum seeker swap deal for longstanding genuine refugees in Malaysia. The proposal was subsequently defeated because of a lack of support from the then coalition opposition and the High Court. In fact, as Labor tried to secure UNHCR support for the plan, a motion calling for the proposal to be abandoned was passed by the House of Representatives. The Greens and the coalition—I repeat, the Greens and the coalition—combined to pass a motion opposing the Labor government's Malaysian refugee swap deal and the proposal was similarly defeated in the Senate. In the House of Representatives, the motion by the Greens member of parliament Adam Bandt passed the House 70-68, with the support of the opposition and Tasmanian Independent Andrew Wilkie.

Notwithstanding that, the Labor government introduced plans to tackle people smuggling movements through the Houston recommendations. I wish to remind members of the chamber of those recommendations, which were endorsed by the Labor government. On 28 June 2012, then Prime Minister Julia Gillard and the Minister for Immigration and Citizenship, Chris Bowen, announced that the government had invited Air Chief Marshall Angus Houston, the former chief of the Australian Defence Force, to lead an expert panel to provide a report on the best way forward for Australia to prevent asylum seekers risking their lives on dangerous boat journeys to Australia. As well as offshore processing, the commissioned report recommended that Australia's refugee intake should be increased.

A key point of the recommendations was to establish offshore processing in Nauru and Papua New Guinea, and we know that the current federal government has issues with how it deals with asylum seekers in Papua New Guinea. The report indicated that the government should pursue talks on the Malaysian solution, but seek more reassurances about the treatment of people who are sent there. It recommended increased cooperation with Indonesia on joint surveillance, law enforcement, and search and rescue. As we have heard today from previous speakers, the recommendation was made to increase the humanitarian intake from over 13,000 to 20,000 places a year, rising to 27,000 after five years.

I know that time is getting away, but I want to reflect on my experiences involving the Australian Defence Force and the men and women who work not only on the Armidale-class patrol boats in the northern waters of Australia but also for customs and other agencies. In 2010, the current immigration minister, Peter Dutton, and I boarded HMAS *Bathurst* to gain an understanding of the good work our men and women do in the protection of our shores. Their contribution and efforts to make sure our shores are protected are invaluable. We should never forget their commitment or the time that they spend away from their homes and families to do the good work of the ADF.