



## SPEECH

**THE HON RICHARD MARLES MP  
SHADOW MINISTER FOR IMMIGRATION AND BORDER  
PROTECTION  
MEMBER FOR CORIO**

**SPEECH TO THE AUSTRALIAN LABOR PARTY'S NATIONAL CONFERENCE**

**MELBOURNE EXHIBITION AND CONVENTION CENTRE, MELBOURNE**

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**\*\*\* CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY \*\*\***

Delegates this issue is as vexed as any our party has struggled with in recent times and today we can resolve it.

In 2001 in the way John Howard handled the boarding of the Tampa, he narrow cast an appalling message to the darkest angels of our humanity for political gain. And I know there are many people here who felt that at the time we followed him down this path, our heads bowed, against our will, with an eye to the ballot box. These feelings were completely legitimate.

If I have learned anything in the last two years, it is that politics alone will not resolve this for us.

We need to be making decisions based on Labor values of compassion, fairness and generosity. Applying these with sincerity to what is a really complicated issue. But if we can get it right, the politics will follow.

Equally, we cannot be driven by standing up and saying what any given room wants to hear. If there are old orthodoxies of the past which in our heart of hearts no longer make sense anymore, then we must have the courage of our convictions to let them go.

“The weight of this sad time we must obey; speak what we feel not what we ought to say.”<sup>[1]</sup>

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<sup>[1]</sup> King Lear, Act 5, Scene 3, *William Shakespeare*

The particular issue at hand is the journey from Java to Christmas Island. The vast majority of those who undertake this journey are genuine refugees. But this journey of itself is not a flight from persecution. No one is fleeing persecution in Indonesia.

What characterises this journey are people smugglers. And we are not talking about Oscar Schindlers here. We are talking about vicious criminal networks, who are making huge profits, by preying on the world's most vulnerable people with the result that hundreds, ultimately thousands died.

And by in large, these people smugglers are now out of business, some driving taxis in Jakarta. This is not conjecture, we have certain knowledge.

And so we must not be a party to starting this journey again and putting these people smugglers back into business with the inevitable consequence that there will be a huge loss of life. Because if we do, you can forget about any future Labor Government being remembered for anything else. We will simply be condemned by history. And so a future Labor Government must be given the full suite of measures to keep this journey shut. And that does mean offshore processing and it does mean turn backs.

What it does not mean is that we are the same as our political opponents. Whereas for the Coalition, shutting this journey is the central piece of an architecture which is about putting a big wall around Australia, and turning our back on the world, we are driven by compassion. And compassion demands that we play a larger role in the world today when the Globe is expecting its greatest humanitarian need since the Second World War.

And so this platform will provide for a transformational commitment to the UNHCR. This platform will provide for Australia to play a leadership role, not just in combating transnational crime, although that is important, but in building a regional humanitarian framework.

It will provide for an increase in our humanitarian intake to 27,000 – twice what it is today. And it will provide for; putting the refugee convention back into the Migration Act, abolishing Temporary Protection Visas which keep people in a permanent state of limbo; and getting kids out of detention as soon as possible.

In sum, it is about opening our door wider and bringing more refugees here and doing so safely. This is vastly different to the Liberals.

But in large measure, our ability to do this is because the journey is shut. If we open the journey again, we will be consumed by it again, just as we were in Government, with the result that less refugees will come to Australia and more asylum seekers will die.

And so I urge you to support amendments 262 and 271 which will greatly enhance our global engagement. And amendments 232 and 235 had been brought by good people, with the very best of intentions, but for all these reasons I am urging you to in the strongest possible terms to vote against them.

This is a hard decision but it is the right decision. Because we “cannot escape the responsibility of tomorrow by evading it today.”<sup>[2]</sup>

***ENDS***

**MEDIA CONTACT: LIDIJA IVANOVSKI 0427 051 563**

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<sup>[2]</sup> Speech, September 2<sup>nd</sup> 1858 (Clinton, Illinois), *Abraham Lincoln, US President*