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June 10, 2018

Annotated Bibliography

Briskman, Linda, Susie Latham and Chris Goddard, *Human Rights Overboard: Seeking Asylum in Australia* (Scribe Publications, 2008)

In this book, Briskman, Latham and Goddard examine the physical and psychological effects of living in the offshore detention centres used to house people seeking asylum in Australia. The authors use a series of first-person accounts to describe the living conditions, providing insight into what it must be like to live in one of these detention centres for months at a time. Some camps do not have enough food and water available for asylum seekers, while others are completely without electricity. When all of the buildings are full, new detainees are forced to sleep in tents until space becomes available. The authors also use first-person accounts to explain the psychological effects of living in an offshore detention center. Former detainees claim that the guards harassed and humiliated them on a daily basis. As a result of the mistreatment, several people attempted suicide. Former detainees also report that staff members are not qualified to address the mental-health needs of asylum seekers. This book provides a great deal of insight into the obstacles faced by the people detained at Australia's offshore detention centres. Although the first-person accounts are interesting, the book suffers from a lack of empirical data. Had the authors used statistics to support the first-person accounts, the entire book would be more compelling.

Fiona Martin and Terry Hutchinson, 'Mental Health and Human Rights Implications for Unaccompanied Minors Seeking Asylum in Australia' (2005) 1(1) *The Journal of Migration and Refugee Issues*, 1.

In this article, Martin and Hutchinson examine issues relevant to unaccompanied minors seeking asylum in Australia. The authors define an unaccompanied minor as "an individual under 18 years of age who has been separated from both parents and who is not being cared for by an adult who has a responsibility to do so." They also cite relevant laws and regulations, including the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, the Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees, and the Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees. Under the Convention on the Rights of the Child, Australia is obligated to provide special protection to children who are temporarily or permanently deprived of their family environments. Despite this obligation, Australia continues to detain unaccompanied minors in offshore centres. The authors claim that detaining unaccompanied minors is harmful to their mental health, as evidenced by the results of a Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission investigation. The HREOC report stated that the process of seeking asylum is stressful and has a serious impact on the psychological health of children. It also confirmed that detainees under the age of 18 are at risk for depression, developmental problems, posttraumatic stress disorder, self-harm and suicidal thoughts. The authors did an admirable job explaining the psychological consequences of detainment on unaccompanied minors. They also summarise the research relevant to Australian detention centres, linking theoretical concepts to real-life outcomes.

Stevens, Christine, 'Asylum Seeking in Australia' (2002) 36(3) *The International Migration Review*, 864.

In this article, Stevens compares the treatment of on-shore asylum seekers with the treatment of people who seek asylum at one of Australia's offshore detention centres. On-shore asylum seekers are seen as illegal immigrants, causing officials to ignore their humanitarian needs. Although offshore asylum seekers are not considered illegal immigrants, they are still held in detention centres. These crowded detention centres often lack adequate bathing facilities and sleeping accommodations, making it difficult for detainees to shower regularly and get enough hours of sleep each night. When a private company took over the management of offshore detention centres, asylum seekers reported that they were subjected to solitary confinement, strip searches, room searches, and other inhumane treatment. The author provides an in-depth overview of the process used to determine if someone qualifies as a refugee, detailed summaries of relevant legislation, and valuable statistics on asylum seekers in Australia. Overall, the article serves as a thorough introduction to the tactics used to limit the number of refugees admitted to Australia. It also provides insight into the issues faced by on-shore and offshore asylum seekers. One of the major limitations of the article is that the author does not do an adequate job contrasting the treatment of on-shore and offshore asylum seekers. She claims that the "two streams of asylum seekers" are treated differently, but she does not provide adequate support for her claim. Based on the data provided, both groups of asylum seekers face persecution and poor living conditions.