



# SUE BOYCE

SENATOR FOR QUEENSLAND



November 6, 2009

The Hon Kevin Rudd MP  
Prime Minister  
Parliament House  
Canberra ACT 2600

Dear Prime Minister

I write as a participating member of the Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade References Committee Inquiry into matters relating to the Torres Strait and attach for your urgent consideration and action a report to the Inquiry by the Torres Strait Island Regional Council dated October 29 and signed by the Mayor, Cr Fred Gela.

I have visited this region several times since my election and I can assure you that Cr Gela has impressed me as a person of the utmost integrity who is dedicated to the welfare and progress of local people.

This report is simply appalling and describes a community in crisis, abandoned and neglected by both the Australian and Queensland governments.

At a time when your government is spending vast sums of money in attempts to deter the entry of foreign nationals from Sri Lanka and elsewhere, this report makes it distressingly clear that foreign nationals from Papua New Guinea enter Australia with impunity.

I specifically refer you to the Mayor's statement under the heading, *Need for Law and order: "It is easy for women in particular to be abducted from our communities and taken to PNG, kept prisoner (this is a fact)..."* and *"It is not uncommon for large groups of PNG nationals to be walking the streets of our communities brandishing weapons (machetes, knives)"* and *"Major Theft occurs with Boats, tools, equipment taken on a regular basis."*

There is more on this subject including the entry of sly grog and drugs and the fact – given that there is unimpeded entry to Australia by PNG nationals - that *"they are sometimes carrying into our communities Tuberculosis, malaria, HIV Aids, Ross River, Dengue, etc"*.

Every page of this submission tells of a community that is living in third world conditions and prey to large numbers of foreign nationals without the slightest protection of the Australian and Queensland governments.

You can well imagine the outcry and the reaction if drunken bands of foreign nationals wielding knives and machetes invaded any other Australian coastal community to terrorise people, abduct and rape women, pillage, potentially spread disease, strip natural resources,



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freely bring sly grog and drugs and appropriate government services provided for Australian citizens.

This, according to the Torres Strait Island Regional Council, is happening there now.

There would be a massive and immediate response by the military, customs officials, State police and other agencies if, for example, such an invasion was attempted in Cairns.

It begs the question: Why shouldn't it be the reaction to the reality happening now somewhat further north in our Torres Strait community?

There is an urgent need for immediate intervention by federal and state agencies. Ignoring these Australians and leaving them to their fate is not an option and, in fact, it would be an international disgrace if no action was taken to secure their safety and protection.

The second part of Cr Gela's submission deals with problems caused by bad laws, woefully inadequate and expensive transport, primitive communications and lack of facilities considered fundamental elsewhere in Australia. These also need to be addressed in a substantial and sympathetic way including consideration of freight subsidy scheme similar to Tasmania's.

However, the urgent priority now is to ensure the safety of these Australians and the protection of our northern border. Our fellow Australians are being betrayed by inaction.

I have written a similar letter to the Queensland Premier, the Hon Anna Bligh MP, and I urge you to work closely together with her on a satisfactory and effective intervention program.

Yours sincerely

Sue Boyce  
Senator for Queensland