



Source: Martin Chulov, 'Kibbutz dream forced to capitalise on change', *The Australian online*, 15/05/06.  
Tags: [politics](#), [incarceration](#), [security](#)  
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'Thank you Senator Amanda Vanstone, Minister for Immigration and Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs.

'And we cross now to civil rights activist Karen Carr who has been stationed out at the Baxter Detention Facility, South Australia, to give you her insight on the state of affairs out there.

'Thank you for joining us Karen.'

'Good evening Sarah. For the past month and a half I have been visiting the Immigration Detention Facility centres of Australia, searching for some clear cut answers as to why the conditions of this type of imprisonment have not yet changed—even after so many years of media exposure and humbling truths told by detainees themselves.

'To put it into perspective now, and show the immediacy with which we need to act, I can tell you that in the past week, two refugees have been hospitalised with chest, abdomen and wrist wounds. The absolute desperation of these men is evident when you realise that these wounds were in fact self-inflicted. It is simply sickening to see what lengths these men will go to for a way out, even if it's only to see the barren desert outside this multi-million-dollar compound.

'Worse still, Sarah, these men will be patched up and sent back to their confines to battle another day, as if nothing ever happened. Problems are not being addressed. Isolation is literally sending these people insane. And it is not just here in Baxter, but also the other Immigration Detention Facility centres spread across the country.

'Rioting still occurs on a regular basis, albeit less frequently from the inside these days as the detainees are plainly just too tired. Tired of fighting—for their freedom, for the use of a telephone, a lawyer, or a simple change from the nightly diet of chicken and rice. If there's rioting here, it's due to the actions of a local band of protestors scaling the barbed wire fences at these very entrances. Sadly, over the years we have become inured to this type of protest.

'I think what we are seeing here though is more than just a reaction to the heinous crimes of the Australian Government. By keeping these asylum seekers locked up in detention centres for such lengthy periods, we as Australians are fostering hatred and angst amongst ourselves, within ourselves.

'Let's not kid ourselves either: this news does travel—these stories of rape, suicide, and self-mutilation can't be stored away in our own secret little vaults. No, these stories are spreading far and wide on international news bulletins, in newspapers and journals across the world, and as a result, we are being castigated. And rightly so I

might add.'

'So is there a sense of urgency on behalf of the Australian Government to quash these leaking stories and find the right solution to the problem of immigration?'

'Seemingly not. There is no simple solution here Sarah, and there never will be. But each and every Australian out there must stop walking around with their blinkers on. We need to stand up as a nation and put a stop to this inexcusable and barbaric imprisonment. It needs to start from a base level, from the general public, demanding that action be taken.

'Over my right shoulder I can see a young man, maybe just 26 years of age, squatting on a bench. He is, like most of the detainees, of Middle Eastern background, and doesn't speak to anyone except an inmate that interprets what the officials have to say. His wife and child of just four years have been separated from him and each other now for 16 months. He stays on that bench for most of the day, staring at the walls that will keep him here under the hot sun, for God knows how many more months to come. He has been told that his child is well, and receiving adequate schooling, but he does not believe it. He has almost given up hope, but knows that if he were back home, there would be even less hope. I tried to talk with him earlier today, but was unable to get even a mutter.

'I did, however, manage to speak with a staff member here yesterday who voiced her disgust at the paper pushing sentiments of a nation trying to cover up these appalling conditions rather than seeking more effective immigration regimes, and I quote; 'Howard, Vanstone, someone, all of us, need to start taking responsibility for our humanitarian obligations. You can't put a band-aid on a broken bone because it won't fix it. This is like a clean snap and needs emergency surgery. It is no joke when I say these people have to live by the day, and for some of them that is simply too hard.'

'Karen, I am afraid that is all we have time for tonight. Thank you for your...'

'That is the exact problem Sarah. No one wants to devote time to this issue. No one wants to discuss the matter, find a proper solution and until...'

'And that was Karen Carr speaking to us from the Baxter Immigration Detention Facility in South Australia.

'After the break, are you really getting what you pay for? We expose the food companies that are ripping you off. See you shortly.'

*Adapted for performance by Barbara Campbell from a story by David Hagger.*