

Senator Andrew Bartlett

Deputy Parliamentary Leader and Democrats Senator for Queensland

Australian Democrats spokesperson for Immigration and Multicultural Affairs

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## **OCTOBER 19TH: 5TH ANNIVERSARY OF SIEV X SINKING**

The Australian Democrats today acknowledge the fifth anniversary of the sinking of the SIEV-X refugee boat, where 353 people lost their lives, including 146 children.

"The SIEV-X incident is a reminder that our debates and laws about asylum seekers are about real human beings in desperate circumstances. It is too important a matter for misleading statements and demonising of refugees," Senator Bartlett said.

"This week also marked the fifth anniversary since the federal government first started towing the overcrowded refugee boats back to Indonesia. Some of the people who were forced back in October 2001 are still stuck in camps in Indonesia 5 years later."

"The period in 2001 was dominated by cover ups, deceit and fear-mongering, coupled with a general disregard for human life and suffering."

The Democrats ensured the broadening of the Select Committee Inquiry into a Certain Maritime Incident to investigate not only allegations made in 2001 by the Federal Government regarding children overboard, but also the detail of the expensive and inhumane Pacific Solution.

"The facts that did emerge about the sinking of the SIEV-X would not have occurred without this Senate inquiry, and would not be able to be done today with the government in control of the Senate.

"This period had profound affects on our migration laws, with the government using them as catalysts to implement harsh and unjust changes to the Migration Act.

"As a result of these unfair provisions in the Migration Act, I have sought to introduce into the Senate a suite of Private Senator's Bills which attempt to remove the more offensive and discriminatory aspects of the Migration Act as well as introducing more humane and efficient alternatives.

"The tenth Bill, the Migration Legislation Amendment (Appropriate Review) Bill 2006 will be introduced today which seeks to remove the rule that means people who lodge protection claims who have been in Australia for over 45 days can have to live for years without any form of assistance or ability to support themselves whilst their claim is determined," Senator Bartlett concluded.