



# Media Release

**Senator the Hon Amanda Vanstone**

Minister for Immigration and Multicultural Affairs

236.06

Tuesday, 17<sup>th</sup> October 2006

## **Burke's misinformation on SIEV X children a disgrace**

"Tony Burke has stooped to a new low in his campaign to convince Labor to scrap Temporary Protection Visas (TPVs.)" Minister for Immigration and Multicultural Affairs, Amanda Vanstone, said today.

"Not only is Mr Burke's policy backflip putting the lives of asylum seekers at risk, he's using misinformation to win support for his case.

"Just raising the possibility of a Labor Government scrapping TPVs will encourage people smugglers to recruit passengers and risk dangerous journeys to Australia in leaky boats and through treacherous seas.

"TPVs, a key plank of Australia's border protection measures, have been effective in slowing to a trickle the flow of unauthorised boat arrivals.

"Our border protection policies have helped saved lives by deterring people smugglers.

"That's allowed Australia to ensure more of its refugee places are taken by those already assessed by the United Nations High Commission for Refugees as being in most desperate need of resettlement.

"But Mr Burke doesn't seem to care. His policy position will encourage people smugglers and their potential clients to put their lives at risk.

"To push his argument along, he claimed yesterday that 146 children were on the SIEV X "...children who overwhelmingly had dads living in Australia...." (see attached transcript extract)

"Yet the report on the SIEV X, from a committee on which the Government had only three of 8 members, found that there were 70 children on the vessel. ( see attached page from report)

"Mr Burke's misinformation and politicking demeans the tragedy for those who lost their lives and will only serve to compound the grief for survivors and family and friends.

"Mr Burke should stick to the facts. If he can't succeed in his ambition of convincing the ALP to change policy on TPVs with the truth – that should tell him something.

"Under the Coalition, our policy is for orderly migration in cooperation with the UNHCR.

"Under Tony Burke, Labor policy would be to encourage people smugglers to come on down."



**Minister's media contact: 0417 445 886**

Attached – 2x pages

Tony Burke, PM, 16-10-06

through in that period actually did do something to save lives, and which policies failed.

I received a report back to me that I had requested some months ago, from the Social Policy Committee of the Labor caucus. It reported on a number of issues, but one of them was the issue of temporary protection visas.

 The reason 146 children were on that boat – children who overwhelmingly had dads living in Australia, who'd been found and had been given protection by Australia – the reason they went to a people smuggler and found themselves on SIEV X, was that their dad wasn't able to be reunited with them. On a temporary visa, he was not able to sponsor them to join him. On a temporary visa, he was not allowed to leave to see them. 

And we ended up with a situation of people giving their life savings to evil operators, who then put their lives at risk and in this case, many did drown.

On receiving that report, Labor's position on temporary protection visas is enshrined in our platform. It's not open to me to announce new Labor policy. We deal with that in our April conference, and whenever we have a lead-up to conference, no doubt we then end up in endless resolutions in the Senate, which we have to vote on, which are framed in terms of current policy before we get to change it. And I'm sure that's something

ADELAIDE	BRISBANE	CANBERRA	HOBART	MELBOURNE	PERTH	SYDNEY
08 8362 2323	07 3259 2100	02 6124 5200	03 6224 2000	03 9348 9191	08 9228 5800	02 9318 4000

AGENCY REPORT For private research and not to be disseminated. Every effort made to ensure accuracy for the benefit of our clients but no legal responsibility is taken for errors or omissions. (\*) - Indicates unknown spelling or phonetic spelling. Metro TV demographics are supplied by OzTAM, Radio and Non-Metro TV demographics are supplied by Nielsen Media Research.

ABs = Managers, administrators, professions. GBs = Grocery buyers.

## Chapter 8

# The Sinking of SIEV X: Intelligence and Surveillance

### Introduction

8.1 In the early hours (approximately 1.30am 'Golf' or local time) of 18 October 2001, a vessel under the pay of alleged people smuggler, Abu Qussey,<sup>1</sup> departed from Bandar Lampung in south Sumatra.<sup>2</sup> 421 passengers and crew, including 70 children, were on board. Ten people had refused to embark due to the boat's size. Media reports, based on passenger accounts, claim that the remainder were forced at gun point by Indonesian officials to board the vessel.<sup>3</sup>

8.2 Before heading to Christmas Island, the vessel stopped near the Karakatau group of islands where 24 passengers disembarked due to concerns about the SIEV's seaworthiness. 397 passengers and crew remained onboard.

8.3 At about noon on 19 October 2001, the engines on the vessel stalled. By about 2.00pm (GT) the vessel began to take on water out of the sight of land, a situation that deteriorated an hour later when it began to take 'heavy water, listed violently to the side, capsized and sank within an hour'.<sup>4</sup> 120 people are estimated to have been in the water after the boat sank; none of the 70 life jackets worked.

8.4 Around noon on 20 October, after close to twenty hours in the water, two fishing boats picked up the survivors. The notes for the People Smuggling Taskforce state:

41 adults and 3 children survived, 352 drowned. Survivors taken to Jakarta – being cared for by IOM [International Migration Organisation] at Bogor

---

1 There are various spellings of Qussey in the intelligence material. Some use 'Quassey' (ADF intelligence review), others 'Qussay' (DIMA Intelligence Notes). Hansard follows Rear Admiral Smith's use of Qussey. Unless citing material, the Committee employs this version in the report.

2 Except where otherwise noted, the account of SIEV X's passage and sinking is based on the following: 'SIEV X Chronology', Attachment A in the declassified summary of the Defence review of SIEV X intelligence, Minister of Defence to CMI, undated, received 4 July 2002; and PST Notes, 'People Smuggling Taskforce – High Level Group Meeting, 3.15 p.m., Tuesday 23 October 2001', p.2.

3 *Transcript of Evidence*, CMI 1983.

4 'SIEV X Chronology', p.2.