

TO: Sunshine Coast Daily (prospective)

FROM: Eveline Goy

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Abuse of children in detention

I am sorry that Mr Glen Elmes MP is outraged at the LNP being labelled 'child abusers'. I am also not surprised that Mr Joe Schlegeris, from the Greens, realised the sensitivity of this accusation and 'made sure that it (the offending tweet) was removed instantly'.

I offer a slightly different perspective on this. In the book titled "Offshore Processing of Asylum Seekers - The Search for Legitimate Parameters", barrister and human rights activist Claire O'Connor reports on the case of Shayan Bedraie, a then six-year old Iranian born child. Shayan, who was detained in the Woomera and Villawood Detention Centres in the early 2000's, suffered severe trauma through witnessing the violence in the centres, the self-harm and the ongoing trauma inherent in such places. His mental health suffered so much that he stopped eating, and parents and doctors feared for his life. His case was presented in Four Corners in 2001, and later in The Inside Story. Piers Akerman from the Daily Telegraph, aided by the Sydney Morning Herald, stepped in the fray to protect the government against the lawyers for the Bedraie family, attacking them personally and attempting to discredit them. The case is highly complex and lengthy. What is worth noting is that in March 2006, well before Rudd and Gillard could claim any responsibility for the calamity of asylum suffering, the NSW Supreme Court approved a \$400,000 federal compensation for the Bedraie family. The Howard Government's answer to a Greens Question on Notice seeking to establish how much the Bedraie case had cost, confirmed that \$1,553,562.71 for the litigation alone.

If anyone can argue that the then federal government's attempt to deny reparation for his child's mental health collapse is not child abuse, they may try but I doubt that decent people could agree. The court's decision seals the case. It is particularly shameful that the taxpayer should have been asked to pay almost two million dollars to defend the indefensible.

Contrast this image of Shayan Bedraie in a catatonic state, with the happy picture of Mr Scott Morrison walking hand in hand with his two beautiful daughters. Yes, I would agree that the detention policy has made child abusers of the LNP, and the ALP has sadly been complicit in their unwillingness to stop it.