Human rights overboard: Seeking asylum in Australia

Offshore detention: Australia's recent immigration history a 'human rights catastrophe'. With a deal on the table that could mean the closure of detention centres on Nauru and Manus, Helen Davidson reviews the saga of offshore processing. Helen Davidson. Following the "children overboard" incident in October 2001 – and the deaths of 353 men, women and children in the Siev X disaster – asylum seekers were a major political issue and Howard went to a federal election with his infamous declaration that "we will decide who comes to this country and the manner in which they come". Howard won the election and offshore processing continued. From this date forth no one who sought asylum in Australia by boat would ever settle in Australia, he said.