

AUSTRALIAN HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION AWARDS

Acceptance speech, Sydney, 10 December 2008

Linda Briskman, Susie Latham and Chris Goddard (winners of Literature (non-fiction award))

Human Rights Overboard evolved from The People's Inquiry into Detention, a citizen's inquiry that captured the hearts and minds of the many people who participated

We thank the Australian Council of Heads of Schools of Social Work which auspiced the Inquiry and believed in an ethical responsibility to expose human rights violations

We thank the many people who joined the Inquiry process to ensure that the stories were told

We thank Scribe for sharing our view that the stories need to be on the public record and accessible to all

The book is a disturbing narrative of the brutality that occurred in our name and for many people shamed this nation

Children, women and men were locked away in harsh conditions and stripped of their humanity

The book also tells the stories of the many ordinary Australians who stood against the cruel policies and saw in the asylum seekers not a threat, but their own sons and daughters, brothers and sisters, mothers and fathers and friends

It is bittersweet to gratefully accept this award from the Australian Human Rights Commission because it is based on the pain of so many

We remember with great sorrow those who died while attempting to seek asylum here

We remember those who died in immigration detention

We remember those who died after release, including those who died in their home countries having been refused asylum in Australia

And we remember those who survived but were so damaged

We ask that future immigration policies remove racism, restore human rights and reinstate accountability.

Never Again