

Opposition slams Christmas Island 'visa factory'

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'Bulging at the seams': Demountables at Christmas Island

The Federal Opposition's immigration spokesman has labelled the Christmas Island detention centre as a "quasi visa factory".

Scott Morrison and Family First Senator Steve Fielding have spent the past two days inspecting the island's detention facilities and talking to detainees.

Mr Morrison says Christmas Island's detention centre is "running on overdrive" because the product that is on offer is too good.

"I believe what we have here is a visa factory," he said.

"We are basically manufacturing opportunities for people to gain access to a protection visa in advance of those who are sitting in camps around the world."

Mr Morrison says the island is "at capacity" and says the Government will need to find another processing centre.

"There's no signs that this is letting up. It will only increase going forward, which will put extraordinary pressure on the island," he said.

Senator Fielding says the facilities on Christmas Island are world class, but they are bulging at the seams because there are too many incentives for seeking asylum in Australia.

"It is very attractive for people to come to Australia and seek asylum because they know within three months they'll be resettled into Australia," Senator Fielding said.

"In many overseas places, it's years, sometimes five years, sometimes longer."

Mr Morrison says the latest protest by detainees is due to the Government's mixed messages about border control.

More than 350 detainees, mostly Tamils, held a protest on the Island on Thursday calling for faster processing of visa applications.

Mr Morrison says the detainees' expectations have been raised by the Government's relocation of those on board the Oceanic Viking earlier this month.

"We need strong border protection. We need [to make sure] people making assessments on whether people come to this country have the time available to do those checks.

"They don't need the difficulty of people having raised expectations by poor decisions and special deals by a government that basically doesn't know what it's doing on border control."

Refugee Action Coalition spokesman Ian Rintoul says the detainees' dissatisfaction with the pace of processing is not simply due to hearing about the treatment of asylum seekers from the Oceanic Viking.

"Many of the people have been there long before the Oceanic Viking was on the political horizon and their expectations are to be dealt with as human beings and for their applications to be processed as quickly as possible," Mr Rintoul said.

"The Oceanic Viking has highlighted the difference, the possibilities of processing to be done in six weeks.

"It's highlighted the possibility. It hasn't raised their expectations."

Mr Morrison, meanwhile, says there is a "stark contrast" between the facilities available to detainees on Christmas Island and Indigenous Australians living in remote areas.

He says there is "no comparison" between the facilities on Christmas Island and those available in areas such as the Alice Springs town camps.

"I saw some excellent internet facilities and computers and which were available to detainees, the recreation facilities, the sport, the health facilities, the availability of nurses," Mr Morrison said.

"Frankly, if our own Indigenous population had access to this level of support and resource, then the gap wouldn't be so large to close."