

Hi Virginia, please find below an abstract, my project introduction, and an extract from one of the later chapters.

### **Abstract:**

'Coming to Australia: Voices from the SIEV-4' charts the journey of one Iraqi family as they make their way to Australian shores. Nahar Sobbi and her three young children eventually found themselves aboard the boat which became synonymous with the 'Children Overboard Affair', however their entire journey was a prolonged two year passage. Crossing mountains in Indonesia, enduring months of incarceration in a Malaysian prison, and a mother's personal struggle with fear and alienation. This is the story of the Australian Asylum Seeker.

### **Introduction:**

#### **The Asylum-Seeker**

The Children Overboard Affair is an event in Australian history that lingers in public memory. The exposure and filtering of the story in the media is such that many Australians still do not understand what really took place. Some may not have followed the story closely or through to its resolution and some may have been exposed only to highly subjective accounts. By now many would have forgotten most of the story's details. There is nevertheless a shared legacy resulting from these events. In the Australian public's collective memory there remains only a faint notion of what an asylum-seeker is and of how our government and the public react to them.

In the Howard era, the humanisation of boat people was forbidden[1]; no close-up photographs were taken, nor any video footage of faces, and there were certainly no interviews with the asylum-seekers. The Rudd government has taken a different approach and now the boats which are arriving are subject to media freedoms not exercised in more than a decade. I seek to reassert those freedoms on the past, by harking back to the SIEV-4, and charting the journey of one family aboard that boat: Nahar Sobbi, and her three children Emin, Yasmin, and Adam[2]. While the journey of the SIEV-4 is well documented, this was only the end of the journey for the Sobbi family. What is left unexplored is the vast majority of their two year ordeal of reaching Australia. What does it really take for these sea-faring escapees to reach Australia? And who are they?

Extract:

“They boarded the boat named the *Olong*. The children's clothes were soon dirty as a result of their dysentery and Yasmin had soon developed sea-sickness. The boat set sail and the sky darkened. Still there was no ship with its individual cabins. It soon became clear that this was

going to be their only boat. Nahar is haunted by the purple colour of the sea at this moment, 'it's a weird colour, up to now I remember the colour of the ocean [sic]'.<sup>[3]</sup> Nahar peered out of a small window and began to talk to her parents, praying for them to hear her and save her from her nightmare. The boat was rocking wildly in the ocean as the colour of the sea and the colour of the sky became merged and indistinguishable. As the boat plunged from one side to the next, Nahar was certain it would not survive. She thought to herself 'I will never forgive myself for what I have made for the children... it was my decision, it was a wrong decision, please don't punish them because I took this decision'."

<sup>[1]</sup>Marr, D, Wilkinson, M, *Dark Victory*, Allen and Unwin: Crows Nest, 2003, p. 258

<sup>[2]</sup> Real names suppressed.

<sup>[3]</sup> Nahar to LH