

# The enforcement infrastructure of public information campaigns: Australia's No Way campaign, colonial logics, and the production of value

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## Abstract

Despite little evidence of efficacy, public information campaigns have been a popular strategy for deterring migration. Advertising campaigns to dissuade would-be migrants from leaving home or seeking asylum are increasingly prevalent around the world, and Australia has devoted millions of dollars to these campaigns. Perhaps the most famous is the campaign launched in 2014, with the message: “No Way. You will not make Australia home.” In this article, I develop the concept of enforcement infrastructure to illustrate the relationships, technologies, actors, and policies that together facilitate enforcement of Australia’s borders and produce campaigns such as the “No Way” campaign. Just as infrastructure facilitates the production of value in other contexts, so too does the creation of enforcement infrastructure produce different types of value in the context of enforcement. Mapping the enforcement infrastructure highlights the different types of value produced by this constellation of actors, from profitable market research to reinforcing colonial logics of exclusion.

## Keywords

Australia, public information campaigns, infrastructure, enforcement, value, migration, colonialism

## Introduction

On 26 March 2016, Australian taxpayers awoke to news that they paid \$6 million for a new feature film debuting shortly in Afghanistan (Cappi and Musarò, 2022; Gartrell, 2016; Pécoud, 2010). In fact, *Journey* was paid for by the Department of Immigration and

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Border Protection, and the storyline followed Afghan migrants who encounter deadly conditions as they attempt to reach Australia by boat. The government paid *Put It Out There Pictures* \$4.3 million to make the film and the Afghan-based Lapis Communications another \$1.6 million to promote it in Afghanistan, Iran and Iraq.

While this film does not sound like typical border enforcement, projects such as *Journey* are part of public information campaigns (PICs) designed to dissuade migrants from crossing borders. Countries like Australia are creating well-researched marketing campaigns using advertising as wide ranging as songs, graphic novels, social media advertisements, and billboards to convince would-be migrants to stay at home. *Journey* was a big-budget full-length film, but the campaign used a variety of other advertisements as well, from graphic novels distributed in Afghanistan and billboards across Sri Lankan roadways to social media advertisements targeting Iraqis and posters at Australian points of entry. The key message stated: “No way: You will not make Australia home.” While the impacts of some of this messaging on Australian and non-Australian audiences has been documented (Fleay et al., 2016; Richardson, 2010; Schloenhardt and Philipson, 2013), there is less information about the value produced through the production and dissemination of materials.

In this article, I pieced together the full web of contractors, non-governmental agencies, and media companies responsible for *Journey* and the accompanying products within Australia’s “No Way” campaign. I argue mapping the campaign through its enforcement infrastructure highlights how different types of value are produced through PICs. The article proceeds as follows: I discuss the usefulness of “enforcement infrastructure” as an approach to analysis, then outline project methods as well as the use of PICs in Australia and elsewhere. I next map the enforcement infrastructure of the No Way campaign. Finally, I consider how mapping the enforcement infrastructure highlights the different types of value produced by this constellation of actors, from profitable market research to reinforcing colonial logics of exclusion.

## **An enforcement infrastructure perspective**

In this article, I develop the concept of enforcement infrastructure to illustrate the relationships, technologies, actors, and policies that together facilitate enforcement of Australia’s borders. This concept builds both on various terms used to describe how international migration itself has been facilitated as well as how the constellation of border enforcement practices and actors have been envisioned, many of which I summarize below. Yet I prefer the term ‘infrastructure,’ as this concept underscores the often-hidden or taken-for-granted technologies, practices and relationships that *enable* enforcement to occur. Drawing on both the notion of ‘migration infrastructure’ and ‘platform migration,’ enforcement infrastructure offers an alternate picture of enforcement efforts that move across and beyond the international border walls, visa checkpoints, and national policy-makers who are often depicted as key within enforcement efforts.

As I suggest above, the actors, networks, and relationships that facilitate international migration have been characterized in many ways: migration ‘management’ underscores the governance systems that regulate migration, including the humanitarian organizations that attend to migration crises (Ashutosh and Mountz, 2011; Casas-Cortes et al., 2015; Fluri, 2023); whereas the focus on migrant agency has championed migrant decision-making within systems of constraints (see special issue introduced by Deshingkar, 2019). Some geographers use the term “migration regime” to describe the multi-national spaces through which migrants travel, the variability to which migration governance is institutionalized,

and the active agency of migrants on the move (Botterill and Burrell, 2019; Marino et al., 2023; Schwarz, 2020).

Meanwhile, these terms can be juxtaposed with how border enforcement is similarly characterized: externalization refers to the management of borders beyond the territorial bounds of the nation-state (Van Dessel, 2021; Watkins, 2017) and the border enforcement ‘industry’ focuses on how enforcement at and beyond the territorial border is often performed by for-profit entities. Gill et al. (2018) propose the notion of ‘carceral circuitry’ to understand the carceral institutions, practices, and relationships included within contemporary border enforcement. The metaphor of the circuit illuminates the sites, practices, or relations of carcerality, and the connections that highlight the “relations between people’s, objects’ and practices’ journeys and the more-than-institutional systems of capital and value-creation that drive them” (Gill et al., 2018: 186).

While each of these concepts offers a different perspective on migrant mobility and border enforcement, in this article, I argue for the utility of the term ‘enforcement infrastructure,’ arguing that a focus on infrastructure not just in terms of migrants, but also in terms of enforcement, helps us better understand PICs. I draw on two key strands of thought to envision enforcement infrastructure: Xiang and Lindquist’s (2014: S124) term “migration infrastructure” is described as the “systematically interlinked technologies, institutions, and actors that facilitate and condition mobility” including commercial, regulatory, technological, humanitarian and social apparatuses. Collins similarly understands platform migration as focused on the “actors, networks and institutions that enable international migration” (Collins, 2021: 866).

While infrastructure often stresses the “middle spaces of migration” (Kern and Müller-Böker, 2015), the term has also described border enforcement. For instance, Walters (2018) frames deportation through infrastructure, which “refers to the systematically interlinked technologies, institutions and actors that facilitate and condition the forced movement of persons who are subject to deportation measures, or the threat of deportation” (Walters, 2018: 2800). While other scholars have described these networks as ‘deportation regimes,’ Walters argues that infrastructure more clearly illustrates that these networks are often messy, dysfunctional, and “assembled more adventitiously and sometimes extra-legally” (Walters, 2018: 2800).

Here, I employ the term ‘enforcement infrastructure’ to describe the networks of relationships, institutions, cash flows, technologies, and discourses that comprise Australian PICs. If ‘migration infrastructure’ describes factors that *enable* mobility, ‘enforcement infrastructure’ describes what *constrains* it. Infrastructure is a useful term because it is expansive: it represents more than governance or ‘management’ of migration; it represents activities within and ‘externalized’ beyond a nation-state; it represents entities beyond the profit orientation of an ‘industry;’ and it represents more than how individual migrants as agents confront enforcement tactics. Functionally, spatially, and economically, infrastructure permits a broad approach to considering what ‘counts’ as border enforcement. Furthermore, enforcement infrastructure is useful because it works to illuminate the hidden or less sensationalized aspects of enforcement: infrastructures are often rendered invisible – for instance, Star and Bowker (2006: 230) note, “for the railroad engineer, the rails are only infrastructure when she or he is a passenger.” Framing enforcement as ‘infrastructure’ illuminates the “adventitiou[s]” or “extra-lega[l]” aspects of enforcement (Walters, 2018: 2800) rather than the all-encompassing, seemingly planned or systematic aspects of an enforcement regime. While many of these terms capture the increasing geographic focus on intermediary spaces, institutions, or relationships that enable or constrain mobility, each highlights different aspects of the migration process. The expansive geographic scope of

information campaigns, their ability to be rendered invisible in contrast to sensational enforcement, and their often-haphazard deployment are all highlighted well by the framing of ‘infrastructure.’ Through this perspective, infrastructure pushes the focus from the linear journey between nation-states to account for the web of state and non-state institutions, practices, and sites through which enforcement takes shape, from the mobile phone advertisements to the maritime surveillance, visa regimes, and asylum bureaucracies. By illustrating the enforcement infrastructure of Australian PICs, I trace the type of value produced. Infrastructure is integral to value production: just as highways facilitate the production of value from the development of suburban homes and the automobile industry, so too does enforcement infrastructure enable particular types of value. Here, I argue that these types of value are not just profit for the contractors who develop and distribute Australian information campaigns, though this is important, but also the value of extending and building on colonial logics of exclusion, value that depends on the illegalization of migrants.

## Methods

This article is based on a comparative study of PICs carried out by the US and Australian governments between 1990 and 2018 (US National Science Foundation Award 1853652). The study explores the use of campaigns to examine how campaigns alter the geographies of sovereignty and modes of governance, and employs feminist periscoping, which “aims to reveal systems, processes, and experiences typically out of view that have previously been left uninterrogated due to lack of access or awareness” (Hiemstra, 2017: 332). Scholars employ periscoping to study questions that limit transparency and continuous access (e.g. Leslie et al., 2023); these conditions are particularly relevant in research on border enforcement (Belcher and Martin, 2013; Bosma et al., 2020). Whereas triangulation synthesizes multiple types of *data* to substantiate claims, periscoping synthesizes methods or approaches. Periscoping uses multiple types of data and campaign approaches to understand common strategies that explain messiness or gaps in data (see also Williams and Coddington, 2021). In this analysis, feminist periscoping provided both a conceptual approach, highlighting the multiple perspectives necessary to understand aspects of research that may be intentionally obscured from view, as well as a very practical insight, making visible how constraints to access shape how enforcement practices can be understood. Tracing financial data through Australian government bureaucracies showed, for instance, how agency name changes and shared costs across different agencies obscures the scope of these projects – periscoping required both piecing together multiple methods for obtaining data *and* making visible how challenging this data was to access.

In this article, I draw from the project archive, where we have compiled, coded, and analyzed over 1000 files representing campaign materials (print, audio and video), government documents related to PICs, media articles, and documentation produced by contractors, mostly obtained through Freedom of Information (FoI) requests, to document the No Way campaign conducted between 2014 and 2016. Whereas this campaign has been heavily covered in domestic media and scholarship, these studies have not mapped the entire network of contractors based on government contract databases. I collected information about the contractors, budgets, and time periods of the No Way campaign from the Annual Reports of the Department of Immigration and Border Protection and Australian Customs and Border Protection Services (2013–14; 2014–15) and cross-tabulated with data from the AusTenders Contract Notice Database. Further information about campaign materials and communication with contractors was obtained through FoI Requests<sup>1</sup>; media coverage of the campaign; questions on notice<sup>2</sup> to the Australian Parliament in years 2013,

2014, and 2015; the archived No Way website; and materials from social media platforms including Twitter, Reddit, and Facebook where campaign materials were circulated. I conduct textual analysis across these different datasets and use interviews from former government officials to add context. Finally, I mapped the locations of this enforcement infrastructure in order to understand the geographic relationships amongst enforcement contractors.

## **Situating information campaigns within the Australian context**

In this section, I describe the use of campaigns in Australia and globally and describe the unique Australian political context for the No Way campaign.

### *The growth of information campaigns*

Campaigns have been part of enforcement and deterrence strategies in the Global North since the 1990s. In Australia, information campaigns date back to 1994, disseminated in Behai, China (Watkins, 2017). Australia funded widespread campaigns beginning in the late 1990s. The use of campaigns by Australia has emerged alongside increasingly harsh border enforcement tactics, such as pushback of asylum seeker vessels (Coddington, 2018), mandatory and indefinite detention (Mountz et al., 2013), and externalization of enforcement into third countries (see e.g. Dastyari and Hirsch, 2019; FitzGerald, 2020; Nethery et al., 2022). Unlike these hypervisible enforcement tactics, PICs are seen as operating in a ‘softer register,’ using emotional messaging and persuasion to convince migrants not to travel (Williams, 2020). Campaigns, as Oeppen (2016: 9) notes, are popular as they “allow governments to be seen to be doing something to control their borders whilst still maintaining a humanitarian image.”

Scholars have documented the use of affective and emotional messaging that attempts to influence migrants’ decision-making (Savio Vammen and Kohl, 2022; Vammen, 2021; Williams, 2020). Williams (2020), for instance, documents how US campaigns targeted Mexican and Central American audiences using gendered imagery and content. Watkins (2020) highlights the Australian use of targeted sermons directed at Indonesian audiences, who are informed that helping asylum seekers is a sin. Despite these powerful, emotionally-laden messaging strategies, research from different contexts such as Ethiopia (Pagogna and Sakdapolrak, 2023), Niger (Van Dessel, 2021), Senegal (Rodriguez, 2019), Libya (Brachet, 2016) and Sudan (Brekke and Beyer, 2019) conclude that messaging oversimplifies the complex contexts migrants must navigate, stigmatizes migrants who leave, and conceals the political causes of risk that migrants face (also see Cappi and Musarò, 2022; Pécoud, 2010). Broader evidence about the efficacy of PICs is scarce. While many campaigns are subject to extensive market research and evaluation, those evaluations are often private and few outside studies measuring effectiveness have been conducted (Browne, 2015). Most evaluations of effectiveness are based on small, opportunistically-selected sample sizes. Evaluations with control groups that measure before and after participant exposure to the campaign materials are rare and challenging (Tjaden et al., 2018). Research across geographic and cultural contexts has repeatedly demonstrated that migrant and potential migrant populations are aware of the dangers associated with irregular migration and that campaigns focusing on the dangers of migration are unlikely to have significant impacts (Heidbrink, 2020). As a 2018 evaluation of 11 campaigns concluded, “Communications interventions are unlikely to produce significant changes in migration behavior over the long term without concomitant efforts to address the structural drivers of migration and

increase access to regular migration pathways” (ARK, 2018). Recent comparative studies of campaigns suggest that messaging continues to be of little influence to migrants (Ajzerle, 2016; Browne, 2015; Rodriguez, 2019; van Bommel, 2020).

Scholars who study Australian campaigns describe them as part of Australia’s wider project of “militarized deterrence” that encompasses externalization practices including interdiction, embedding officials within foreign border protection operations, surveillance, and aggressive immigration detention (Dehm and Silverstein, 2021: 19). They note that campaigns are portrayed as humanitarian, yet often contradict Australia’s international legal responsibility towards asylum seekers (Schloenhardt and Philipson, 2013). Scholars suggest Australian campaigns purposefully promote “strategic ignorance” rather than useful information for asylum seekers (Bishop, 2020), instead communicating to various audiences Australia’s control over borders and migration (Dehm and Silverstein, 2021). Australian campaigns have been analyzed through a variety of disciplinary lenses: Hightower (2013) shows how the “theatricalized encounter” portrayed in campaigns simplifies the complexities of asylum seeker decision-making, whereas Watkins (2015) compares messaging across various Australian campaigns that uses economic justifications. Emotional messaging uses visual and audio methods to associate seeking asylum with danger and financial ruin (Coddington and Williams, 2022; Humphrey, 2018).

Scholars have consistently found that information campaigns do not change the behaviors of people seeking asylum in Australia. Watkins (2017) writes that although campaigns attempt to shape the subjectivities of potential migrants, migrants do not internalize messaging and do not change their behavior. Richardson (2010) similarly concludes that migrants’ opinions are not as malleable as messaging suggests. Fieldwork with would-be Hazara migrants in Afghanistan supports these findings: Fleay et al. (2016) interviewed migrants and found they did not receive the majority of their information from campaigns, nor did the campaigns influence their decision to migrate.

As the largest and best-funded Australian campaign to date, scholars have studied the content of the No Way campaign, from the striking full-length feature film “Journey” to the visual products produced throughout the campaign with the small boat surrounded by rough seas, exploring the gendered dimensions of campaign materials (Dehm and Silverstein, 2021) as well as the spatial implications of visual media (Watkins, 2017). More broadly, the No Way campaign has demonstrated how campaigns simplify the challenges of migration to invisibilize the role of government policy in creating the dangers migrants face (Bishop, 2020; Hartig, 2017). Leroy (2023) connects the No Way campaign to questions of national identity within Australia. As the No Way campaign has begun to influence policy-makers in other places, scholars have traced the reach of No Way messaging amongst far-right and anti-immigrant politicians in places such as Italy (Zirulia and Martinico, 2022), Germany (Geibel et al., 2023) and its resonance with the growth of far-right politics in Australia (Richards and Jones, 2023). While the No Way campaign has been studied in various ways, the specific organization of the campaign and its relationship to the production of value has not been extensively documented; neither popular media reporting nor academic studies have generated the precise outline of campaign contractor relationships which follows in the sections below.

### *Australian political context*

In the Australian context, campaigns have developed alongside the rise of harsh border enforcement policies. Whereas mandatory detention for asylum seekers was established in 1992, Australia’s efforts to control maritime boundaries especially accelerated after the 2001



dispute over the asylum seekers onboard the *MV Tampa* (McAllister, 2003; Rajaram, 2003). Prime Minister John Howard then passed the Border Protection Bill which radically changed the legal and political treatment of asylum seekers (Perera, 2002; Tazreiter, 2017). Over the following two decades, Australian immigration enforcement has become increasingly draconian (Ghezelbash, 2018; Mountz, 2010; Neumann, 2015).

Broadly, scholars of Australian immigration have tied these border enforcement measures to Australia's struggle to reconcile its settler colonial status and its attempts to differentiate itself from its Asian neighbors (Perera, 2002; Rajaram, 2003; Sahhar and Griffiths, 2018). Immigration has been a method of regulating race and national identity in Australia since its founding: the first policy of the newly-federated Australian government in 1901 was the Immigration Restriction Act which banned non-white immigration. Scholars have connected practices of Aboriginal enclosure and migrant detention (e.g. Perera, 2002; Rajaram, 2003) and linked struggles over the arrival of asylum seekers to the unreconciled nature of colonial dispossession of Aboriginal people (Tedmanson, 2008). As Rajaram (2003: 299) writes about contemporary practices of detaining refugees in Australia, "not Australia' [becomes] peopled by those who have tried to enter 'real' Australia, in order to remind us of the 'true' Australian space."

Attempts to contain and control asylum seekers and Aboriginal populations are racialized. The common criminalization and dehumanization of refugees through names like "queue jumpers" in Australia reflects longer histories of settler colonial racialized violence that include isolation and imprisonment of Aboriginal people; the removal of Aboriginal children in the 'Stolen Generation;' and the disproportionate imprisonment of Aboriginal people and the numbers of Aboriginal deaths in custody (Gannoni and Bricknell, 2019; Geoghegan, 2011). Campaigns emerge in a particular national, settler colonial, and political context within Australia, building on legacies of harsh border enforcement and racialized violence. In the next sections, I will detail how the 'No Way' campaign built on and extended these foundational logics.

## The No Way campaign

### *Context and messaging of the No Way campaign*

The No Way campaign dates from late 2013, and Prime Minister Tony Abbott's federal election win. Abbott created a new program, 'Operation Sovereign Borders,' to bring together 15 different departments and agencies responsible for border enforcement and policing under military leadership, and would fulfil Abbott's campaign promises (Karlsen and Phillips, 2017). Operation Sovereign Borders promised to turn back asylum seekers traveling by boat. The Refugee Council of Australia (2023) estimates that between 2014 and 2020, Australia turned back 873 people.

Campaigns became part of the tough asylum seeker messaging accompanying Abbott's election victory. These campaigns are not just conveying messages about enforcement, but enforcement tactics in themselves, attempts to deter migrants through information directed at migrants, family members, friends, and wider diaspora communities (Coddington and Williams, 2022). Beginning in early February 2014, Australian media described a series of advertisements featuring a new, tough message: a small, isolated boat in rough waves, with the words "NO WAY" across the top (Figure 1). In Sri Lanka, billboards stated:

Never come to Australia without a visa! Never put your feet in Australia without a visa. In Australia there is a military that enforces this. People who come by boat without a visa will

  
 Australian Government

  
**NO WAY**  
**YOU WILL NEVER SET FOOT IN AUSTRALIA**

A people smuggling boat carrying 54 Sri Lankans, that departed Indonesia in May 2015 and attempted to travel to New Zealand, has been returned to Indonesia by Australia.

**THINK AGAIN BEFORE YOU WASTE YOUR MONEY, PEOPLE SMUGGLERS ARE LYING.**

- If you get on a boat without a visa, you will not end up in Australia.
- Any people smuggling boat attempting to enter Australian waters, or travel to New Zealand through Australian waters, will be detected, intercepted and safely removed.
- The rules apply to everyone : families, children, unaccompanied children, educated and skilled.
- No matter who you are or where you are from, you will never set foot in Australia.

**The Australian Government's policy against maritime people smuggling has not changed, the way to Australia is closed.**

A message from the Australian Government  
 For more details: [www.australia.gov.au/novisa](http://www.australia.gov.au/novisa)

Released by Department of Home Affairs under the Freedom of Information Act 1982

**Figure 1.** “No Way” advertisement drafted by the Australian government in 2016.



never be allowed to enter and boats that go to Australia without permission are returned to the deep sea.

Migrants were informed that the government would not process asylum claims, and they would be sent to offshore facilities. Radio advertisements in Urdu and Dari deployed over 50 times in August 2015, for instance, declared that,

Our government has implemented the toughest ever measures to stop people coming to Australia illegally by boat. You will be detected, you will be intercepted, you can be turned back, and if you do make it to Australia, you will not stay there and you will never ever live here.

Campaigns were part of Australian government's largest deterrence spending to date (Whyte, 2014). These funds were directed at a broad target audience, including migrants from Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Iran, Iraq, Nepal, Pakistan, Somalia, Sudan, Vietnam, Tamil-speaking areas of Sri Lanka and India, and Rohingya-speaking areas of Myanmar and Bangladesh. Campaign messaging was also directed to diaspora communities within Australia. A spokesperson for the Immigration and Border Protection Department stated that, "The campaign is targeted at source and transit countries for people smuggling activity, as well as diaspora communities in Australia" because "family and friends are the primary information source for people in Australia and overseas" (Dias, 2016). Messaging included television, radio, press advertising, posters, billboards, internet advertisements on social media and blogs, an 18-page graphic novel, leaflets, stickers, community engagement meetings, transit advertising, street theater, and the film "Journey."

Two examples illustrate the breadth of the No Way campaign. Across the different campaigns examined in my wider research project, precise market research was conducted on how target messages affected specific audiences accounting for differences in nationality, ethnicity, gender, and age. Yet the No Way campaign messaging was very standard despite the range of places targeted. In 2014, Australian newspapers broke the news of an 18-page graphic novel storyboard that was released on the Department of Immigration and Border Protection as well as the Customs and Border Protection Services websites. Images show the journey of an Afghan man who attempts to seek asylum in Australia. Interactions with suspicious people smugglers and travel by boat in rough seas are followed by a rescue by the Australian navy and detention on Nauru, pictured in Figure 2.

Metadata from the digital storyboard shows that the author worked for STATT Consulting in Singapore (xBorder, 2014). There is little data to show how and where the comic was actually distributed, but the frequent use of pictures from this storyboard in Australian domestic media (what interviewees referred to as "earned media") over the following years raised its profile. The second example is less publicly known, but probably more typical of messaging efforts. This 2014 audio clip was produced in Urdu and Dari (translated on the archived No Way campaign website) for distribution outside of Australia. The spot states:

A message from Mr Scott Morrison, the Australian Government Minister for Immigration and Border Protection. My message to anyone considering getting on a boat illegally bound for Australia is simple, don't do it. Our government has implemented the toughest ever measures to stop people coming to Australia illegally by boat. You will be detected, you will be intercepted, you can be turned back, and if you do make it to Australia, you will not stay there and you will never ever live here. You will be quickly sent to PNG or Nauru where you will stay. You will not get what you are coming for, what you are taking the risk for, and I will make sure of that.



**Figure 2.** Page from graphic novel released on the Australian Department of Immigration and Border Protection and Customs and Border Protection Services' websites, 2014. Image depicts the Australian-managed immigration detention center on Nauru.

These different products represent the range of messaging efforts, as well as the aspects of data that are missing from our project archive: I do not have information on the distribution of either product, but through educated guesses based on other campaigns I believe market research directed the placement of materials amongst target audiences, and that evaluations were conducted after deploying the messaging to assess the percentage of the target audience reached by the messaging. As a former government employee I interviewed noted, however, assessing the efficacy of campaigns like No Way was challenging for the government:

I don't think efficacy is quantifiable. The intelligence sectors could tell you about projects being disrupted but could we claim credit? I can't say that 5,000 people saw a campaign in Lombok and they then decreased to 2,000 people who were willing to migrate, it's not quantifiable... We can tell you how many you reach and clicks and where in the world and the metrics from the platforms but how do you relate that to fewer boats? Or if there were fewer asylum seekers? Or fewer deaths? (Pseudonym, 2023)

Despite the gaps in data, what is exceptional about the No Way campaign in comparison to many other global campaigns is that I have access to excellent, detailed financial records of the campaign, and those records make visible the enforcement infrastructure. While others have noted the use of contractors for the No Way campaign (e.g. Dehm and Silverstein, 2021; Watkins, 2017), illustrating their geographic range and precise distribution of contract funds is novel.

### *The No Way campaign's enforcement infrastructure*

My analysis of government-issued contract data and financial reports provides an overview of the actors within the No Way campaign. Figure 3 illustrates the contractor locations, type, and contract amounts in the No Way campaign. Contractors from Australia involve a range of public relations and market researching firms, including several firms such as Mitchell Adcorp Alliance and Universal McCann who are contracted by a range of government agencies. However, on the list too are much smaller firms such as Red Elephant Research (known now under the name Cultural Pulse) and LOTE Marketing (known now as The LOTE Agency) who specialize in targeting 'multicultural' audiences both within Australia and abroad. In addition to these Australian contractors, however, the campaign also tapped contractors working in countries across the region, such as Thompson Associates and the TAL Group of Sri Lanka and the Leo Burnett public relations firm in Indonesia. Figure 3 also reveals the range of entities contracted – some are public relations and marketing firms. Yet others involve NGOs, such as the branches of the International Organization for Migration in Bangladesh, Indonesia, and Vietnam, or humanitarian organizations such as the Organization for Eelam Refugee Rehabilitation and India ADRA in India. The No Way campaign relied on a complex web of actors, connecting government agencies in Australia with far-flung private, nongovernmental, and humanitarian agencies across the Asia-Pacific region. Geographic locations of contractors is shown in Figure 4. The diversity of actors highlights the depth of investment in campaigns as enforcement tactics, not simply in terms of financial investments, but investments of time and relationships across space.

An example of the relationships developed over time is the use of Essence Communications to do market research for the No Way campaign. Essence was first employed by the Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs in 2009 to research a social media campaign, and became listed on the Department of Finance's Research Consultant Communication Multi-Use List, a prequalification that allowed departments to choose Essence for research without using an open bidding process thereafter (Ludwig, 2016). As one former government employee described to me,

the panels are available to every department in the public service. The value for the money is there because you don't have to go out and look for them but they're not always the cheapest. They have all been cleared to be on a panel and then you can pick out who to use. (Pseudonym, 2023)

Essence's work with government departments grew rapidly: the Department of Home Affairs first employed Essence in 2012 to research anti-people smuggling campaigns, and continued contracting with them in 2013 and 2014 to test No Way campaign materials. After changing their name to WhereTo Research Based Consulting, they received additional contracts for border security-related campaigns in 2017, 2019, and 2023 worth over \$1.5 million, as well as contracts for work from other agencies (Australian Government, 2023).

Contractor	Type	Location	Spending
<i>Scoping (2013-2014)</i>			
McNair Ingenuity Research	Private	Australia	\$128,478
Essence Communications	Private	Australia	\$76,395
Cubit Media Research Group	Private	Australia	\$65,950
<i>Implementation (2014-2016)</i>			
STATT Consulting Ltd	Private	Singapore	\$17,308,534
Thompson Associates / TAL Group / Total Media Direction	Private	Sri Lanka	\$6,032,478
Put it out there Pictures	Private	Australia	\$4,421,049
Mitchell Adcorp Alliance	Private	Australia	\$4,699,711
Lapis Communications	Private	Afghanistan	\$3,174,555
Universal McCann	Private	Australia	\$2,654,811
International Organisation for Migration - Indonesia	NGO	Indonesia	\$2,256,000
Leo Burnett Indonesia	Private	Indonesia	\$1,122,771
Red Elephant Research	Private	Australia	\$1,003,760
LOTE Marketing	Private	Australia	\$598,565
International Organisation for Migration Vietnam	NGO	Vietnam	\$585,982
Unknown Name (press, billboards, rickshaw, inflight advertising in Pakistan)	Private	Pakistan	\$301,774
McNair Ingenuity Research Pty Ltd	Private	Australia	\$218,512
Organisation for Eelam Refugee Rehabilitation (OfERR) India	NGO	India	\$208,648
Ensemble	Private	Malaysia	\$184,250
Mediabrand Australia	Private	Australia	\$180,139
Unknown Name (Radio, cinema, rickshaw and transit advertising in India)	Private	India	\$127,786
Expert Opinion Pakistan	Private	Pakistan	\$107,239
Zanala Bangladesh	Private	Bangladesh	\$77,179
Unknown Name (Press advertising in Pakistan)	Private	Pakistan	\$60,526
International Organisation for Migration Bangladesh	NGO	Bangladesh	\$60,000
Malar Publications Ltd /KAL Radio Ltd/Suryan FM Unit of Sun TV Network, Real Image Media Technologies (Radio and cinema advertising in India)	Private	India	\$44,766
Nalamdana Charitable Trust India	NGO	India	\$34,424
Community Theatre Sri Lanka (British Council)	NGO	Sri Lanka	\$33,592
India ADRA	NGO	India	\$27,714
Prom-ad Creative Communications/PG Media Brands SDN BHD (leaflets in Malaysia)	Private	Malaysia	\$15,360
<i>Market research and evaluation (2014-2016)</i>			
Cubit Media Research	Private	Australia	\$385,191
Essence Communications	Private	Australia	\$271,755
McNair Ingenuity Research	Private	Australia	\$60,662
Woolcott Research and Engagement	Private	Australia	\$28,380
			<b>\$46,556,934</b>

**Figure 3.** Contractors and firm locations, No Way Campaign, 2014–2016. Sources: Australian Department of Immigration and Border Protection Annual Report, 2013–14; Australian Customs and Border Protection Service Annual Report, 2013–14; Australian Customs and Border Protection Annual Report 2014–15; Australian Department of Immigration and Border Protection Annual Report 2014–15; AusTenders Contract Notice Database.

From emails released under FoI from other campaigns, we can infer that Australian government employees maintained frequent correspondence with Essence staff as they carried out market research and disseminated their results. The breadth and length of Essence's experience working with the Australian government is not unique, but not all contractors on the No Way campaign had such a profitable relationship with the Australian government. Nalamdana Charitable Trust India is recorded as receiving funds in 2014–15, for instance,

## No Way Campaign Contracts (2013-2016)

Amount contracted and location of contractors



**Figure 4.** Location and funds spent for No Way Campaign, 2014–2016. Sources: Australian Department of Immigration and Border Protection Annual Report, 2013–14; Australian Customs and Border Protection Service Annual Report, 2013–14; Australian Customs and Border Protection Annual Report 2014–15; Australian Department of Immigration and Border Protection Annual Report 2014–15; AusTenders Contract Notice Database. Note: some costs from concurrent campaigns were unable to be separated from No Way budget.

but never again (Australian Customs and Border Protection Services, 2015; Australian Government, 2023).

Finally, Figure 3 shows that the Australian government spent over \$46 million on the No Way campaign, including \$4.4 million for ‘Journey’ feature film production, \$33,000 for community theater in Sri Lanka, and \$301,000 for inflight and rickshaw advertisements in Pakistan (Australian Customs and Border Protection Services, 2015; Department of Immigration and Border Protection, 2016, 2017). Invisible in these figures is the complex nature of funding these campaigns. During the campaign, new financial relationships were established, others terminated, and even the Australian agencies tasked with funding these efforts were reshuffled. Understanding these relationships as time-limited and context-dependent indicates the fragility of the system, and paints a picture of fleeting connections across space and time, rather than heavy-handed border enforcement that envelops a region. Figure 3 illustrates how these enforcement campaigns create value, not simply the economic value of the contracts – though this is significant – but also the underlying information economies that support these contract relationships. Through these different forms of value, as I will describe in detail below, enforcement becomes embedded in transnational relationships and provides benefits to state and non-state actors, even as the actual efficacy of PICs to achieve their stated goals remains debatable.

Tracing the No Way campaign’s enforcement infrastructure illustrates important aspects of these messaging projects: first, infrastructures highlight the intermediaries who are important in crafting and deploying border enforcement tactics – it is not just the





**Figure 5.** Screenshot of Donald Trump's twitter account, 2019.

Australian government and the would-be migrant seeing a billboard in Sri Lanka who is the focus, but also the web of intermediaries who craft that message and disseminate it around the globe. Secondly, understanding enforcement as infrastructure makes visible the nature of the relationships between the Australian government, the web of contractors, and the would-be migrants, which often depend on personal connections and transnational relationships to endure (Williams and Coddington, 2023). Finally, infrastructures bring attention to how the migration 'industry' generates value financially, but also produces less market-oriented forms of value, value which is often obscured through a focus on migration control as an industry.

### Value production through information campaigns

Tracing No Way campaign's enforcement infrastructure highlights the extended geographic and financial web of connections that underpin deterrence projects. Focusing on the contracted amounts shows the financial value created by the campaigns: under No Way, over \$40 million is funneled to enforcement contractors. While \$40 million is not massive compared to the billions of dollars Australia spends on immigration detention or surveillance projects, it is considerably more than could have been spent on processing potential asylum seekers' protection claims. Indeed, the Australian government would have paid approximately \$4400 per person per year to support each asylum seeker in the community on a bridging visa. Chalfin (2012: 296, 293) calls border security a late-capitalist fix, noting that an "over-accumulation" of security characterizes post-9/11 border security efforts.

The \$40 million spent on the No Way campaign could certainly be characterized as what Chalfin (2012: 296) describes as “excessive expenditure” on state security. The production of financial value not only creates the infrastructure of enforcement, but also maintains it over time, cementing it in place through relationships that facilitate continued collaboration. For instance, Australia maintains relationships with many contractors from the No Way campaign, including TAL Group/Thompson Associates of Sri Lanka, who were paid over \$1.68 million for advertising, marketing and distribution of offshore communications between June 2022 and June 2023 (AusTenders, 2023).

Drawing attention to the financial value produced through enforcement is not new, but geographers are increasingly showing how refugees and asylum seekers are embedded within global capitalist regimes. Ramsay (2020: 3) writes that approaching refugees through the context of humanitarian necessity “conceal[s] how their lives are implicated within and indicative of new formations of global capitalism.” Migration management becomes an extractive site for capitalism, Morris (2020: 89) argues, where “countries in the Global South strategically capitalize on the value of refugee hosting or containment” even as refugee labor and precarious political rights offer potential for additional “development opportunities.” Scholars have described these extractive opportunities as a ‘predatory bioeconomy’ (Andersson, 2018), which involves the growing connections between humanitarian work and financial technologies (Tazzioli, 2022) as well as the other profitable activities associated with the control and management of migrants (López-Sala and Godenau, 2022). Raineri (2022), for instance, explores how different combinations of state and non-state actors work through formal and informal mechanisms to extract financial value from migration in the Sahel. Raineri (2022) argues that value that is extracted from migrants is not limited to profits: information and knowledge are also valuable, and subject to extraction. Mapping enforcement infrastructures draws attention to the range of spaces and actors involved in these extractive processes, who are more diverse than the range of humanitarian or for-profit entities usually associated with migration control.

Yet other types of value production are revealed through mapping this enforcement infrastructure. There is specificity about the intersection between non-citizenship and value: it is because of migrants’ mobility and citizenship status that their activities are able to generate particular forms of value. Conlon and Hiemstra (2017), for instance, explore how immigration detention in the US pays extremely low wages for detainee labor, generating profits for the operators of detention facilities. The specificity of migrants to these practices of generating value is what Martin (2020: 747) describes as “status value,” which is “a value form produced by the illegalization of mobile people... [and] refers to the specific potential their illegality offers states and service providers managing that illegality.” Martin notes that status value circulates as revenue from outsourcing practices, as surveillance data, and as precarious labor. Rather than existing on the fringes of global capitalist accumulation, migrants instead become central to new and innovative means of extracting value because of their status value (Coddington et al., 2020).

The status value of illegalized, would-be asylum seekers makes possible the accumulation of financial gain documented above, but it is also central to the production of new forms of value for the Australian funders of the No Way campaign. As Bird and Schmid (2021: 10) note, bordering produces value not only through the “array of bordering, channeling, and containment practices to regulate surplus populations and create opportunities for profit extraction,” but also the potential political and social value generated from such practices. This more expansive understanding of value – as political and social capital, rather than simply financial profits – can be traced to feminist understandings of value and social reproduction (Gibson-Graham, 2008; Katz, 2001; Rodríguez-Rocha, 2021). Value included

approving political coverage: in a country with 25 million people, the issue of approximately 10,000 migrants arriving by boat to seek asylum in Australia in 2014 was one of the election priorities. The No Way campaign and Operation Sovereign Borders represented the fulfillment of key Liberal Party campaign promises. In 2015, even after the crisis in Syria had begun to dominate headlines, the majority of Australians continued to support Operation Sovereign Borders' harsh treatment of asylum seekers (Taylor and editor, 2015).

The No Way campaign also generated additional political value abroad through the transmission of No Way's messages into other right-wing, anti-immigration contexts: in 2015, for instance, Dutch politician Geert Wilders copied the No Way campaign in his own anti-immigration videos, where a slogan pictured behind him reads: "No Way. You will not make the Netherlands home" (Tovey, 2015). Later, in 2019, US President Trump tweeted pictures of several No Way campaign materials, writing that "These flyers depict Australia's policy on illegal immigration. Much can be learned!" (Henriques-Gomes, 2019).

The tweets built on President Trump's previous approving comments: in a 2017 telephone call with then-Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull, President Trump noted with pleasure that Australia's policies towards asylum seekers were harsher than those of the US, saying "you are worse than I am" (Henriques-Gomes, 2019). Meanwhile, in March 2023, the introduction of an Illegal Migration Bill in the UK replicated No Way messaging, with UK Prime Minister Rishi Sunak tweeting out messages stating: "If you come to the UK illegally you will be BANNED from ever claiming asylum in the UK" as part of the government priority to "Stop the boats."

The targets of all of these political projects are not accidental: on average, the asylum seekers arriving by boat are poorer, geopolitically disadvantaged, and racialized (Bolger, 2016). They are often reinscribing patterns of colonial mobility with their migration attempts, and media and government rhetoric construct their movements as 'illegitimate' even as their attempts to seek asylum are legal (Rowe and O'Brien, 2014). Australia's disproportionate expenditures on migration deterrence also represent disproportionate *political* expenditures, resulting in political attention to migrants arriving by boat that far outweigh the actual cost to the Australian public of dealing with these asylum claims. As political expenditures, enforcement infrastructure's production of political value is in their production and extension of colonial logics of national belonging. As Bird and Schmid (2021: 6) write about humanitarian responses, migration deterrence is part of the "racialized management of surplus populations within systems of global capital accumulation." The surplus populations they cite are rendered surplus through their relationships to global capitalism, influenced by colonial histories and neocolonial relationships that continue in the contemporary period. In the Australian context, racialized citizenship imaginaries shaped through the process of settler colonialism continue to exclude migrants arriving by boat from understandings of national belonging (Nethery, 2021; Sharples and Briskman, 2021). The political and social value of these campaigns is therefore to normalize, legitimate, and ultimately spread colonial rationalizations of national belonging amongst countries of the Global North in particular, garnering support for Australia's policies and legitimating anti-migration policies across political contexts.

The value, both in terms of financial profits and expansion of colonial logics, produced by the No Way campaign are forms of Martin's (2020) "status value." The value generated through the No Way campaign infrastructure is produced through the illegalization of asylum seekers arriving by boat to Australia. Since Operation Sovereign Borders began turning back asylum seeker vessels, or transferring asylum seekers directly to offshore detention centers, seeking asylum by boat has been effectively rendered illegal – even as Australia continues to welcome asylum seekers arriving to the country by plane. Yet extracting value

from migrants cannot simply be slotted into capitalism, but must also be understood as “labor and extractive operations – which may or may not be directly productive or explicitly profit oriented” and may instead represent “new frontiers of capital” (Martin and Tazzioli, 2023: 7–8). I argue here that enforcement infrastructure represents another form of an extractive frontier, integrating new and different forms of financial and neocolonial value into capitalism that is also dependent on the illegalization of refugees. Different kinds of entities – from the IOM to private advertising and market research firms – become enmeshed within these extractive opportunities, generating value through the illegalization of migrants and as Bird and Schmid (2021) note, reproduce or exacerbate migrant vulnerability as they do so.

## Conclusions

I argue in this article that mapping the extent of contractors and actors involved in the No Way PIC revealed a specific infrastructure of enforcement. Rather than focusing on the would-be migrant on one end of the journey, and the Australian reception at its territorial borders at the other, a focus on the entire enforcement infrastructure reveals two important aspects of contemporary enforcement in this context: that relations of enforcement produces profit as well as value generated through the maintenance and expansion of colonial logics of exclusion, a form of value that can be seen as integral to capitalist logics.

Framing films such as *Journey* and the wider No Way campaign as enforcement infrastructures makes visible important aspects of contemporary border enforcement. Such projects extract value from would-be migrants, not simply for Australian politicians, but also for wider networks of contractors and actors throughout the region. Enforcement becomes increasingly expansive and hard to contest because while the funds are paid by Australian taxpayers, the beneficiaries extend from Sri Lanka to Singapore. A focus on infrastructure makes clear the range of actors invested in enforcement tactics. In the case of information campaigns, where the overall efficacy of the campaigns for deterring migrants is still debatable, actors beyond the would-be migrant are essential to explaining how and why enforcement is produced in the ways that it is. The would-be migrant, as Cappi and Musarò (2022) argue, may not even be the focus of information campaigns, which instead may be aiming to justify and legitimate migration control efforts. Enforcement like the No Way campaign produces value in terms of maintaining and extending racialized, exclusionary colonial logics about the potential for national belonging, within Australia and internationally. An enforcement infrastructure approach shifts attention to the relationships and networks beyond the frame of the nation-state that are essential in these efforts, but at the same time, sheds light on the continuing presence of (neo)colonial logics that underpin and facilitate these transnational connections.

Yet in addition to highlighting particular aspects of contemporary enforcement, enforcement infrastructures also illuminate important absences. For instance, funding a \$46 million PIC with Australian tax dollars means taking that money away from other projects. At the same time as Australia funded graphic novels, billboards, and social media advertisements, it was removing funds from the Final Departure Bridging Visa E and Status Resolution Support Services, government programs that funded asylum seekers support. Asylum seekers in Australia today face greater risks of eviction, homelessness, food insecurity because of these funding cuts (St Vincent de Paul Society National Council, 2018). Meanwhile, the expansion of colonial enforcement logics to other sites and spaces gives new purchase to colonial legacies of exclusionary border control, rendering migrants to the Netherlands, US, and UK increasingly vulnerable. The expansion of enforcement

infrastructure and its success at extracting different types of value creates new forms of precariousness elsewhere, and even as funding PIC production and distribution in places like Afghanistan could be read as investment, they need also to be understood simultaneously as disinvestment as well. Changing configurations of enforcement infrastructures shape not only projects of border security, but the production of new forms of insecurity as well.

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1. FoI requests in the Australian context were useful in two ways: whereas filing new FoI requests had mixed results because of heavy redactions – the work of websites such as <https://www.righttoknow.org.au/> also provides access to previous FoI requests and the documents released, which added to the information available.
2. Records from the Australian Parliament including questions on notice can be searched through the Parliament website (<https://www.aph.gov.au/SenateQON>) or Senate Hansard website ([https://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary\\_Business/Hansard/Hanssen261110](https://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Hansard/Hanssen261110)) to obtain information about campaigns.

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