



ABC Online

AM - Japanese law student released from Villawood

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Reporter: Brendan Trembath

ELIZABETH JACKSON: A Japanese law student is celebrating her sudden release from an immigration detention centre in Sydney.

Megumi Ogawa was locked up more than two months ago after a long running dispute with the Department of Immigration and the University of Melbourne.

Ms Ogawa was to be deported this week, but a last minute application for asylum has helped secure her release.

BRENDAN TREMBATH: Megumi Ogawa, with degrees from two top Japanese universities, had the dubious distinction of being the only Japanese citizen in an immigrant detention centre at Villawood in south-western Sydney.

But she is free for now, staying with friends and still getting used to her new surroundings.

MEGUMI OGAWA: It's strange that the walls are not closed to me, so far away. And yeah, I can go out. (laughs) Yeah, I'm happy with that.

BRENDAN TREMBATH: Megumi Ogawa came to Australia in 1999 to complete a PhD.

Her specialty is broadcasting law, and her work has been praised by a former High Court Chief Justice.

But when she was late in applying for an extension the University of Melbourne terminated her enrolment.

Ms Ogawa is suspicious that she was locked up on the 19th of May, days after a court agreed to hear a claim against the University.

Melbourne University has said the case has no merit.

Megumi Ogawa is still waiting for a court date, but in the meantime this highly qualified law student is preparing for a more urgent case.

She has applied for asylum, making an application for the sort of visa normally granted to people

fleeing persecution.

The Department of Immigration says she can stay in the country while the application is assessed.

MEGUMI OGAWA: Because I apply for a protection visa, pending the final determination of the protection visa, I will be released.

BRENDAN TREMBATH: It seemed an unusual move for people following your case for someone from a very developed, affluent country to be suddenly applying for a protection visa. What protection do you need?

MEGUMI OGAWA: Well actually I needed the Australian Government's protection to secure my trial in the Federal Court against the University of Melbourne. Without Australian Government's protection my right to trial will be diminished.

I'm researching on international convention on broadcasters right, and if DIMIA deport me, then I may have difficulty in travelling overseas, which means that I may not be able to attend overseas conference, which means my research will be diminished, so my academic freedom was endangered.

ELIZABETH JACKSON: Law student Megumi Ogawa in that report from Brendan Trembath.

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