



March 2015 Newsletter

## **Youth Ambassadors, Moss Report & Breaking News**

### **2015 ChilOut Youth Ambassadors chosen**

ChilOut received a large number of very impressive applications for its 2015 Youth Ambassadors Program and, from this pool of applicants, we have chosen 9 amazing young people to be our 2015 Youth Ambassadors. Some of our Youth Ambassadors came to Australia as asylum seekers while others were born in Australia. All of them share the same desire to raise their voice against the detention of innocent children and see a positive change to Government law, policy and practice concerning vulnerable children who seek protection in Australia. ChilOut will be holding a training weekend for our Youth Ambassadors in the next few weeks. Keep your eye on ChilOut's website and future newsletters for more information about our 2015 Youth Ambassadors and the important work they will be doing with ChilOut throughout the year!

### **Update on Children in Detention - 240 still held**

The number of children in detention has been decreasing over recent months and, according to the Department of Immigration and Border Protection's latest statistics, dated 28 February 2015, there are:

- 133 children held in immigration detention facilities within Australia; and
- 107 children held in immigration detention facilities on Nauru.

The Government has indicated that it will continue to release children from detention facilities within Australia, but maintains that the children held in detention on Nauru are not part of its promised release, and that it takes no responsibility for these children. ChilOut will continue to fight until there is no child left in detention, including on Nauru, and will continue its work until legislation is amended to ensure that children are never able to be locked up in future.

### **Breaking News - Senior Doctor speaks out against treatment of children on Nauru**

Professor David Isaacs, Senior Staff Specialist at Westmead Children's Hospital, has just published a scathing [editorial](#) describing his experiences as a consultant for International Health and Medical Services (IHMS) working on Nauru. Professor Isaacs explains that: "We were utterly appalled by the Nauru Processing Centre, a prison camp except in name, which was situated in the centre of the island where it was hottest and most humid. Living conditions were Spartan. Asylum seekers lived in lines of adjoining tents without privacy or running water .... The children we saw had a variety of stress-related behaviour problems and somatic complaints. We saw

examples of self-harm, the most chilling being a 6-year-old girl with strangulation marks from a fence-tie, whom we referred urgently to the visiting child psychiatrist.”

Professor Isaacs has joined with leading paediatricians working in refugee child health to publish a paper in the April issue of the Journal of Paediatrics & Child Health on The Forgotten Children report by the Australian Human Rights Commission (AHRC). The paediatricians commended the AHRC on its report, and urged bipartisan support to end mandatory immigration detention, expedite the release of people seeking asylum from detention, and implement the Inquiry’s recommendations.

## Latest News

### *Australian peak health groups unite in statement on ending child detention*

Australia’s peak health groups have come together in a [joint statement](#) to call on the Australian Government to immediately release all children and their families from immigration detention in Australia and Nauru. The health groups highlighted the long-lasting harm that is caused to children by holding them in closed detention facilities. The bodies that made this call included the Royal Australasian College of Physicians, Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Psychiatrists, Australian Medical Association and the Public Health Association of Australia.

### *Arrests of Asylum Seekers and Refugees on Nauru*

Several days of unrest on Nauru led to the [arrest of 186 refugees](#) who have been resettled in the community on the tiny island. The refugees were protesting the conditions on Nauru and Australia's refusal to resettle them. Many of those arrested were part of family groups, with several unaccompanied children taken into custody. ChilOut has consistently expressed concern over the plight of those resettled on Nauru, particularly a vulnerable group of 28 unaccompanied children, who have been subject to [physical and verbal attacks](#) since their release from detention.

### *Moss Report finally released*

The unrest on Nauru foreshadowed the release of the long-awaited [Moss Review](#) into recent allegations relating to conditions and allegations of sexual and physical abuse at the detention centre on Nauru. A heavily redacted version of the report, released late afternoon on Friday 20 March 2015, detailed evidence of several rapes and the sexual assault of minors. The former integrity commissioner Phillip Moss, who led the investigation, also raised concerns that many incidents were under-reported because detainees were worried it would jeopardise their refugee status. 19 recommendations were made in the Moss report, two of which concerned the rights of vulnerable children:

- *Recommendation 5: The Department liaise with the Government of Nauru to ensure that child protection issues are reflected in the work currently being done on the Nauruan criminal code.*
- *Recommendation 6: The Department and the contracted service providers continue to work with the Nauruan Government to ensure that a robust child protection framework is developed.*

ChilOut is deeply disturbed that after detaining children on Nauru for two years, there is still no child protection framework in place to protect the young people detained as well as those in the community. The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, to which Australia is a party, is very clear: the best interests of each child must be foremost in any policy decisions. We firmly believe that detention is never in the best interests of child asylum seekers, but especially not in remote offshore centres where the safety and welfare of children is so blatantly ignored.

## *UN Special Rapporteur on Torture condemns Australia for treatment of children seeking asylum*

The UN Special Rapporteur on Torture, Juan Mendez, has [delivered a report](#) in which he has condemned Australia's treatment of asylum seekers. He stated that the Australian Government had violated the rights of asylum seekers, including children, to be free from torture and cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment by failing to "provide adequate detention conditions; end the practice of detention of children; and put a stop to the escalating violence and tension at the regional processing centre." Rather than taking heed of these findings, Prime Minister Abbott [criticised](#) the UN and described the findings as "absolutely bizarre".

### **Support ChilOut**

#### *Marathons and other sporting events*

Are you running the Sydney City to Surf this year? Join [#TeamChilOut](#) on #EverydayHero and help us raise much needed funds! Sign up [now](#) to become one of the first 12 supporters to get a ChilOut t-shirt! (We can't guarantee your size, but first in gets the most choices). If you're running other marathons or sporting events you can also help. Just sign up with [#EverydayHero](#), join Team ChilOut and start asking friends and family to sponsor you! If running isn't your thing, please consider supporting others. The incredible Daniel is subjecting to himself to the gruelling Canberra Marathon to raise money for ChilOut. He is aiming to raise \$1,000 and needs another \$580 to reach his target. To support Daniel, please go [here](#).

#### *'Shave for a cause' for ChilOut*

In a first for ChilOut, our wonderful and brave supporter Hannah has decided to go bald for children in detention! Hannah has already raised almost \$1,000 for ChilOut and once she reaches \$2,000 she will shave her head. Please help Hannah reach her target by donating [here](#).