

#RightTrack

Getting on the #RightTrack means people can live in peace in our community

When any of us feel vulnerable or in danger, we like to know we have a safe place to turn to. When people seek asylum they, like all of us, need a sense of belonging and a place to feel safe - a home.

THE CURRENT SITUATION

Successive governments have chosen to develop a detention system that deliberately denies people's basic rights to freedom and safety.

Detention:

- exposes people seeking safety to further harm and trauma and keeps people in limbo with no sense of stability or security.
- isolates people indefinitely for extended periods with no fair process for them to defend their right to freedom.
- deliberately dehumanises people, such as referring to people by a number rather than their own name. People are treated like criminals with no respect for their privacy, health conditions, relationships, or culture.
- has become militarised since the introduction of the Australian Border Force (ABF), which has unprecedented powers to operate without scrutiny, accountability and transparency.

The ABF has unchecked control over people's living conditions, such as moving people between detention centres without any warning nor communication about their whereabouts. Separating families and friends and blocking people from seeing their lawyers causes unnecessary distress and panic.

Under the Government's Border Force Act, professionals who reveal or report information about abuses in immigration detention, including nurses, mental health workers and teachers, can be jailed for two years. This raises even greater concerns about the transparency of this system.

While there is a growing awareness of the Government's treatment of people on Nauru, Manus Island and Christmas Island, the unacceptable conditions for people in onshore detention—here in our community—is yet to be widely reported.

We cannot allow any form of abuse in our detention centres, and our Government needs to ensure that any system is transparent, accountable and upholds people's basic rights.

GETTING ON THE #RIGHTTRACK

A system that treats people fairly and with respect for their safety should:

- Allow people to live in peace with their families in our community while their cases for asylum are assessed fairly, efficiently and within set timeframes.
- Ensure that people can access services that help them get on with their lives, including English classes, further education and training, health services, psychological support, and opportunities to build their social networks like sport and community activities.
- Grant people the right to work to support themselves and contribute while their applications are processed.
- Provide access to legal advice and assistance at all stages of the process, to ensure people have a fair chance to present their cases.

Getting on the #RightTrack is up to us.

Join the movement to get our future with people seeking asylum on the #RightTrack:

<http://www.righttrack.online>

The Detention System

- The Facts

- The policy of mandatory detention, first introduced in limited form in 1992, has grown in scope and now forms a central part of our Government's treatment of people seeking asylum.
- Since 19 July 2013, under the Labor Rudd government, any person arriving to Australia by boat without a valid visa was to be removed to Manus Island or Nauru for processing of their claims for Protection. They are not eligible for resettlement in Australia.
- Subsequent federal governments have turned back boats of people seeking refuge and have returned them to unsafe conditions.
- Although the vast majority of people on Manus Island and Nauru have been found to be refugees, there is nowhere safe for them to be resettled and they remain arbitrarily held in unsafe conditions. Most people have been held in these conditions for over 4 years.
- There are no time limits for how long a person can be detained. The average time the Government detains people is 493 days, and some still remain there after almost a decade.
- Numerous reports provide an insight into the militarisation of our immigration detention system and the ongoing abuse of people in our Government's care.
- Immigration policy discriminates against people who arrive by sea. People who arrive by sea are mandatorily detained in offshore camps while those who arrive by plane on a valid visa can be allowed to live in the community while their protection claims are processed, or detained onshore if their visa expires.
- People can be moved between detention centres without notice, reducing their access to consistent legal advice and support.
- The Australian Government's detention system detains people for longer, causes people more harm, and has fewer checks and balances than comparable systems around the world.
- People seeking protection are also held in detention centres across Australia, where access to legal assistance is limited.
- Australia's onshore detention system operates in a shroud of secrecy with little to no opportunity to review decisions made by the Department of Home Affairs. The Department uses immigration detention as a punitive tool to deter people from seeking Protection in Australia and to criminalise the asylum seeking process.
- In addition to detention and compliance costs, the Australian government has been liable for huge sums of money in compensation for the abuse and inadequate treatment of people in detention. In September 2017, the Australian government settled a class action brought by people detained on Manus Island for \$70million AUD, the largest pay-out out in a human rights class action in Australia.
- Many reports have shown that people inside these detention centres face significant risk of physical and mental harm.
- “Between January 2011 and February 2013 there were 4,313 incidents of actual, threatened and attempted serious self-harm recorded in immigration detention facilities in Australia. In the 2012-2013 financial year there were 846 incidents of self-harm across the immigration detention network...Between 1 July 2010 and 20 June 2013, there were 12 deaths in immigration detention facilities. Coroners have found that six of those deaths were suicides” (Australia Human Rights commission 2013).

² #RightTrack is a community-led movement resourced by the Asylum Seeker Resource Centre (ASRC).
www.righttrack.online