



# ChilOut

children out of immigration detention  
WWW.CHILOUT.ORG

ChilOut - Children Out of Immigration Detention

<http://www.chilout.org/>



## Australian Human Rights Commission Reveals Systematic Child Abuse



## Australian Human Rights Commission Reveals Systematic Child Abuse

The Australian Human Rights Commission (AHRC)'s released its long-awaited report last week called "The Forgotten Children" on children in immigration detention. You can download a full copy of the report [here](#). The report details the inhumane conditions in

which children seeking asylum are forced to live as a result of Australian law and policy and the severe mental health and developmental consequences that result from keeping them in detention. The report's findings were informed by medical and developmental experts and were a culmination of 5 public hearings, 239 submissions and 1,129 interviews with children and parents in detention.

Following the report's tabling, ChilOut released a press [statement](#) applauding the AHRC for its rigorous investigation and expressing our deep concern about the report's findings. We also joined 204 other groups in a [unified statement](#) calling on the Australian Government to immediately release all children from Australian-funded detention centres in Australia and Nauru and to ensure the detention of children is never repeated. ChilOut made clear to the [media](#) that locking up children in detention centres is nothing short of state-sanctioned child abuse. The overwhelming conclusion reached in the report is that, under Australia's detention regime, we are causing serious and long-term damage to vulnerable children and denying them many of the most basic human rights.

## Report's Key Findings and Recommendations

The report contains a staggering number of disturbing findings concerning the impact of holding children in detention. To read more, you may want to check out this excellent piece in [New Matilda](#), but here are some of the report's most concerning findings:

- 34% of children in detention have mental health disorders requiring psychiatric treatment;
- Parents of children have high rates of mental illness with 30% of adults in detention having moderate to severe mental health conditions;
- From January 2013 to March 2014, 128 children engaged in actual self-harm and 171 children threatened self-harm;
- 233 assaults were reported involving children, some of which included sexual assault;
- Over 100 children on Christmas Island were denied education for more than a year; and
- Most of the 119 children on Nauru have been detained for more than 16 months, living in tents and sleeping on stretcher beds with no timeframe for resettlement.

The report concludes with 16 recommendations, which include that: all children be released from both onshore and offshore detention no later than 4 weeks after the report's release; legislation be amended to state that children are detained for only a strictly limited period of time necessary to conduct health and security checks; an independent guardian be appointed for all unaccompanied children; all children currently and previously detained have access to government-funded mental health support; and a royal commission be established to examine the impacts of detention on the physical and mental health of children and to look into remedies.

## How You Can Take Action

Although some children have been released from detention in recent months, there are still 211 children in detention in Australia and 119 children in detention on Nauru. Prime Minister Abbott has made clear that he will ignore the AHRC's findings, stating to the [press](#) that he feels no guilt "whatsoever" and that the AHRC should be "ashamed of itself" for its inquiry. ChilOut is determined to hold the Government to account for the continued detention of children and ensure that the findings and recommendations of the report

remain alive until all children are released and the suffering of those children is fully addressed.

Here are some suggestions for what you can do to take action and ensure the report's recommendations are implemented:

- ***Become more informed*** – this will put you in a better position to educate others. Consider reading the AHRC's report in full or, if you don't have time, watch our [video](#). There are also lots of facts contained on our website and you might like to read the submission we made to the AHRC's inquiry [here](#).
- ***Sign our petition*** – We've joined forces with GetUp and other groups to create an online petition calling for the immediate release of all children from detention. Please add your name to our [petition](#) and encourage your family and friends to do the same.
- ***Write emails and letters*** – to your local federal MP, the Minister for Immigration, cross-bench senators like Ricky Muir, and urge them to do everything they can to ensure children are released from detention. Here are some suggestions on [what to include](#) in your email or letter.
- ***Raise awareness in your community*** – host a 'Free the Children' event in your local community to spread the message that children don't belong in detention. All the information about hosting one of these events can be found on [our website including a DIY kit](#). If you're not able to host one, you might want to go along to the next Free The Children Event hosted by Seaforth Baptist Church at Manly Corso (Tony Abbott's electorate!) on Saturday 28<sup>th</sup> February from 10am to 2pm.

### **Another way to take action ... [Donate to ChilOut](#)**

ChilOut has big plans for 2015, not least of which is to ensure that the AHRC's recommendations are urgently implemented and that all children are released from detention as soon as possible! We also intend to launch a campaign to have all children released from detention on Nauru and brought to Australia. The Australian Government continues to claim these children are not its responsibility, but ChilOut and international bodies like the United Nations strongly disagree. ChilOut is also in the final stages of selecting its 2015 Youth Ambassadors from an amazing group of passionate young people many of whom came to Australia as refugees. These young people will work with ChilOut to raise awareness in the Australian community and schools. However, none of this can become a reality without your help. Please consider donating to ChilOut at: [www.chilout.org/donate](http://www.chilout.org/donate).

### **Looking for Volunteers for our website – NationBuilder Experience needed**

Our website and administrative infrastructure, including all content, donations and newsletters, is managed via the [NationBuilder](#) community platform. We need ongoing assistance and support to edit and maintain our content. We also need assistance to refresh the look and feel of our website to ensure it is the most effective tool that it can be. If you have NationBuilder experience and would be happy to volunteer a small number of hours per week to help, we would like to hear from you! Please send an email with your interest and experience to [admin@chilout.org](mailto:admin@chilout.org).