



Refugee Council of Australia

REFUGEE COUNCIL CALLS FOR IMMEDIATE MORATORIUM ON OFFSHORE TRANSFERS

The Refugee Council of Australia has called for an immediate moratorium on transfers to Nauru following the tragic example of a five year old girl who has attempted to commit suicide following her prolonged detention there.

Over 100 Australian organisations and community groups, including churches and religious institutions, human rights, aid and development bodies, advocates and community organisations have joined the call to cease transfer of asylum seekers back to harm.

Paul Power, CEO of the Refugee Council of Australia said, “An innocent young girl of just five years old has been driven to attempting suicide because of the Australian Government’s inability to provide a satisfactory duty of care on Nauru. No child should be sent there and certainly not sent to a situation while the environment remains so dangerous.

“This young girl, who has shown sexualised behaviour, has self-harmed and is obviously profoundly and negatively impacted by the Australian Government’s policy of detaining children in extremely harsh environments, is indicative of the inability of the inadequacy of this current policy.

“Any parent would be appalled by the impact on this vulnerable young girl, and we call upon the Australian Government to immediately cease the transfer of vulnerable asylum seekers until all the recommendations of the Moss Review and the Cornall report are implemented.

“We call on the Australian Government to show some compassion for a young vulnerable girl and not return her, nor any other vulnerable people to Nauru until the safety and protection of all asylum seekers can be guaranteed.

“The recent Moss Review and Cornall Reports illustrated sexual abuse, including rape, violence, drugs for favours and a general failure to provide safety and security, particularly for women and children, highlighted the inappropriateness of Nauru as a place to send already vulnerable asylum seekers.

“The Government has accepted all recommendations in the Moss Report and as such, no further children, women, nor men should be sent to Nauru not Manus until all recommendations are satisfied and safety and security of children and women can be assured”, concluded Mr Power.

For the full statement and list of signatories, see below.

FOR MORE INFORMATION CALL TIM O’CONNOR 0431 147 366



Refugee Council of Australia

CALL FOR IMMEDIATE MORATORIUM ON SENDING ASYLUM SEEKERS OFFSHORE

Joint statement by Australian organisations and community groups

24 April 2015

We, the undersigned, call for an immediate moratorium on the transfer of asylum seekers to Nauru and Manus Island until the safety and security of vulnerable asylum seekers can be guaranteed.

The recent Immigration Department-commissioned independent investigations, the Moss Review into the failures of protection for children and women on Nauru, and the Cornall Report into the ruinous conditions on Manus Island, illustrate the inappropriate levels of protection and security inherent in the current system.

The Australian Government, in accepting all recommendations of the Moss Review, has acknowledged that major changes are needed at Nauru to ensure that women and children can be kept safe from physical, psychological and sexual abuse.

The Moss Review also highlighted serious deficiencies in conditions at the Nauru detention centre and noted that asylum seekers had concerns about their personal safety and privacy. The Review concluded that asylum seekers' safety should be considered paramount and that the Australian Government needs to do more in relation to infrastructure, policing and staffing, including ensuring that staff are properly trained on issues of personal safety and privacy for asylum seekers.

Conditions at Manus Island are no better: after two years of operation, a majority asylum seekers have still not had their applications processed and only a handful of people have been moved to the Lorengau transitory facility. Over 950 men remain at the Manus Island detention centre, continuing to live in fear. Recommendations from the Cornall Report into the Manus Island detention centre have not been implemented to a satisfactory standard.

As appropriate care is not available on Manus Island or on Nauru, over 200 asylum seekers and accompanying family members who have been in offshore processing facilities are currently in Australia for medical treatment.

Many of those detained on Manus Island and Nauru are now suffering significant mental distress including post-traumatic stress disorder. Returning those people, including children, to the place of their suffering and even to the place where they may have experienced sexual abuse, amounts to cruel, inhumane and degrading treatment.

Fear of return to Manus Island and Nauru is so acute that self-harm and attempted suicide have rapidly escalated amongst this group. Part of their fear is due to the Government's removal of procedural fairness, which means they are held incommunicado, without phone access to lawyers, family or friends, for hours and have their personal belongings packed by detention centre officers while they wait to be removed offshore. Because the Immigration Department does not reveal who will be transferred each week, hundreds of people have heightened anxiety for days before each scheduled transfer.

Asylum seekers and refugees have legitimate fears for their safety, and the Australian Government has not implemented meaningful changes to detention conditions at Nauru or



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Manus Island to ensure they comply with both its own commissioned reports as well as Australia's obligations under international law.

We call for an immediate moratorium on transfers to offshore detention centres, at least until such a time as all recommendations of the Moss Review and Cornall Report have been fully implemented, and the Australian-funded detention centres comply with minimum international standards for the treatment of the people detained there.

This statement is supported by the following organisations:

Refugee Council of Australia (statement coordinator)

A Just Cause

ACOSS

ADRA Australia

Amnesty International Australia

Apollo Bay Rural Australians for Refugees

Asylum Seekers Centre

Australian Baptist Ministries

Australian Churches Refugee Taskforce

Australian Coalition to End Immigration Detention of Children

Australian Council For International Development

Australian Education Union

Australian Lawyers for Human Rights

Australian National Committee on Refugee Women

Australian Refugee Association

Ballarat Refugee and Asylum Seeker Support Network (BRASSN)

Ballarat Community Health

Ballina Region for Refugees

Balmain for Refugees

Baptist Care Australia

Bayside Refugee and Advocacy Association

Befriend a child in Detention

Blue Mountains Refugee Support Group

B'nai B'rith Australia/New Zealand



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Braidwood Rural Australians for Refugees

Bridge for Asylum Seekers Foundation

Brisbane Refugee and Asylum Seeker Support Network (BRASS)

Buddies Refugee Support Group, Sunshine Coast

Burmese Rohingya Community in Australia

Caritas Australia

Castlemaine Rural Australians for Refugees

Catholic Archdiocese of Melbourne, Office of Justice and Peace

Catholic Archdiocese of Sydney, Justice and Peace Office

Catholic Diocese of Darwin

Catholic Diocese of Toowoomba, Social Justice Commission

Catholics in Coalition for Justice and Peace

Catholic Justice and Peace Commission, Archdiocese of Brisbane

Catholic Social Services Australia

Centacare South West NSW

Centrecare (WA)

Centre for Human Rights Education, Curtin University

Centre for Refugee Research, University of NSW

Children's Rights International

ChildFund Australia

ChilOut

Coalition for Asylum Seekers, Refugees and Detainees

cohealth

Combined Refugee Action Group, Geelong

Common Grace

Communicare

Compassion and Justice for Refugees, South Australia

Conference of Leaders of Religious Institutes in NSW

Corangamite Grandmothers against Detention of Refugee Children



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Cyber Christian Community WA

DASSAN (Darwin Asylum Seeker Support Network)

Dominican Sisters of Eastern Australia and the Solomon Islands

Edmund Rice Centre Mirrabooka

Edmund Rice Centre Sydney

Franciscan Missionaries of Mary, Australia

Geelong Interchurch Social Justice Network

Grandmothers Against the Detention of Refugee Children

Institute of Sisters of Mercy, Australia and Papua New Guinea

Islamic Council of Victoria

Jesuit Refugee Service Australia

Jesuit Social Services

Jews for Refugees

Liberty Victoria

Melbourne Catholic Migrant and Refugee Office

Missionaries of the Sacred Heart

Multicultural Services Centre of WA

NSW Council of Civil Liberties

NSW Council of Social Services

NSW Teachers Federation

NT Council of Social Service

Oxfam Australia

Pax Christi Australia (NSW)

Plan International Australia

Presentation People's Social Justice Group, Ballina

Presentation Sisters Queensland

Presentation Sisters Western Australia

Quakers, WA Regional Meeting

Refugee Advice and Casework Service



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Refugee Advocacy Network

Refugee Advocacy Service of South Australia Inc (RASSA)

Rural Australians for Refugees, Bellingen and Nambucca Districts

Rural Australians for Refugees, Daylesford and District

Rural Australians for Refugees, Armidale

Safe Asylum

Sanctuary Australia Foundation

SCALES Community Legal Centre

SCARF Inc, Illawarra

Sydney Justice and Peace Coalition

Sisters of Mercy Parramatta

Sisters of St Joseph

Sisters of the Good Samaritans

Social Responsibilities Commission, Anglican Diocese of Perth

South Australian Refugee Health Network

South Australian Council for Civil Liberties

St Vincent de Paul Society National Council of Australia

Surf Coast Rural Australians for Refugees

Tasmanian Asylum Seeker Support

The Tasmania Opportunity

Victorian Arabic Social Services

Townsville Multicultural Support Group

UNICEF Australia

Uniting Church In Australia

Victorian Council of Social Service

Victorian Council of Churches

VOICE Australia

Warrnambool Rural Australians for Refugees

Welcome to Australia



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Western Region Ethnic Communities Council

Women's Health in the South East

World Vision Australia

Wyndham Community and Education Centre