

Dear Ministers,

You will be aware of the concerns expressed by Mr. Ed. Santow about the overcrowding inside two alternative places of detention (APODs) for refugees and asylum seekers--that is in the Kangaroo Point Central Hotel in Brisbane and the Mantra Hotel in South Preston, Victoria. According to Mr. Santow, social distancing is not possible while so many are detained there, and the lives of the detainees are at risk.

APODs are not isolated from the wider community--guards, service staff, cleaners and others go in and out. They can carry infection in, and others will carry it out. Mr. Santow's warning should be treated seriously and the response should be urgent.

I remind you of the consequences of Donald Trump's dismissal of warnings about the novel coronavirus as fearmongering.

I am writing therefore to urge you to rescue the people detained in those two places from their almost inevitable infection with the SARS-2 virus if they stay there, and the likely deaths of some of them. I urge you to act swiftly and place them in community detention, or release them to safe places in the community.

It is true that cases have been trending down: in Queensland in particular there have been no new cases of the virus in the last few days. However, as Professor Paul Kelly, the Deputy Chief Medical Officer, said on the ABC's Coronacast podcast on Wednesday 22 April, there is a risk of a second wave of the virus, which would be worse than the first. Moreover, there may be asymptomatic cases, with people who are not aware that they have the disease able to spread it to others, who may die of it.

There are 9,900 members of *I Have a Room* who have declared their willingness to take an asylum seeker or refugee each from detention into their own homes.

I urge you to take up their offers, and act before it is too late

Yours sincerely,