



3 May 2013

No decency in detaining innocent children

In July 2010, Prime Minister Julia Gillard said Australia's basic decency did not accept the idea of punishing women and children asylum seekers by locking them up.

Latest figures show there are 1062 children in closed detention facilities.

Now, the Australian Government is sending children to immigration detention facilities in Wickham Point near Darwin. There are also plans to send more to the remote Curtin facility in Western Australia.

In 2008, the Government declared that detention should be used only as a last resort and for the shortest practicable time.

Two years later, the Federal Government said it would remove most children out of immigration detention facilities and into the community.

The number of children in detention is at an all-time high.

A detention facility is no place for a child, let alone a vulnerable child whose life experiences have been shaped by conflict, war or persecution.

The Australian Medical Association has described the detention of children as a form of child abuse.

Living in an environment where adults are involved in self-harm damages a child's mental health and sense of well-being.

As Australians, we are better than this.

Increasing the capacity of detention facilities to accommodate more children is unacceptable.

Moving more children into community care and support is the answer.

How you can help

- Outline your concerns to your local MP and call for the Government to release children into community care.
- Write letters to the editor making it clear that no child should grow up behind bars when there are successful community models available.

How to contact your local MP

http://aph.gov.au/Senators_and_Members/Guidelines_for_Contacting_Senators_and_Members

Essential reading

Latest immigration detention statistics

http://www.immi.gov.au/managing-australias-borders/detention/_pdf/immigration-detention-statistics-feb2013.doc

For research and experiences of children in detention in Australia

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

Out of Sight Out of Minds campaign

<http://www.outofsight.org.au/>

For international research about alternatives to detention

<http://idcoalition.org/children/>

Media statement by the Prime Minister and Minister for Immigration, announcing the removal of most children out of immigration detention facilities

<http://bit.ly/w3yxeR>

Speech by Prime Minister opposing the detention of women and children

<http://www.theaustralian.com.au/politics/julia-gillards-speech-to-the-lowy-institute-on-labors-new-asylum-seeker-policy-for-australia/story-e6frgczf-1225888445622>

Article 37(b) of the convention on the Rights of the Child states that: *“No child shall be deprived of his or her liberty unlawfully or arbitrarily. The arrest, detention or imprisonment of a child shall be in conformity with the law and shall be used only as a measure of last resort and for the shortest appropriate period of time.”*

<http://www.austlii.edu.au/au/other/dfat/treaties/1991/4.html>

Evidence given by Dr Peter Morris from the Northern Territory AMA to the Joint Select Committee on Australia’s Immigration Detention Network

<http://bit.ly/wr5IHV>

Refugee Council of Australia media release on Government plans to send children to Wickham Point and Curtin

http://refugeecouncil.org.au/n/mr/130501_ChildrenDetention.pdf

Refugee Council of Australia Policy Brief

<http://www.refugeecouncil.org.au/r/pb/PB1303-Children.pdf>

Feedback is encouraged

Please share any responses you receive through your advocacy work. Send any feedback to media@refugeecouncil.org.au