



Refugee Council of Australia

Media Release – for immediate release

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Welcome moves to release children from detention

The Refugee Council of Australia (RCOA) has today welcomed the announcement that children and their families would soon be released from immigration detention facilities.

“Releasing children and their families into the community will relieve the emotional distress and mental anguish that detention has been proven to cause. This is particularly important for those who have fled horrific situations of war or persecution.” Paul Power, CEO of RCOA said.

RCOA has long advised Governments that there are a range of options that could be used in order to release children and their families from detention, while ensuring that any security concerns are addressed. “The release is very important, but there must be support programs in place for asylum seekers in the community so that NGOs do not carry the burden of providing material support.” Mr Power said.

While RCOA welcomes the move, there are some concerns that the release will take as long as up to June 2011. “This is far too long for vulnerable children to wait for release from detention. We would hope that their refugee applications would be processed long before this deadline about detention would arrive.” Mr Power said.

RCOA also cautiously welcomes the announcement that long term options for the accommodation of families would be upgraded, with new facilities built.

“There does need to be some kind of upgrade of the accommodation facilities provided to families, but we stress that the first option should be to accommodate children and families in the community, not in any form of detention.” Mr Power said.

The Refugee Council notes that this policy will be utilising existing powers and practice put in place and used by the former Howard Government. It is inline with the expectations that most Australians had in 2005 when the former Government released children from immigration detention.

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