



# Refugee Council of Australia

**Media Release – for immediate release**

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## **SCRUTINY OF DETENTION WELCOMED**

The Refugee Council of Australia (RCOA) welcomes the Commonwealth Ombudsman's announcement to use his *'own motion'* powers and investigate the use of force against asylum seekers on Christmas Island last month.

At the time RCOA expressed deep concern over the use of weapons and questioned how the situation at the North West Point detention centre was being handled.

"It must be said that, if the Government had implemented the many recommendations made to it by RCOA, by the AHRC and even by the Ombudsman as recently as February this year, we may not have seen the events of March unfold as they did." Paul Power, CEO, RCOA.

"The Ombudsman has reiterated a point made time and again by RCOA; the present detention reality of immigration detention is far removed from the government's own 2008 Detention Values policy. RCOA urges the Government to revisit this document and make changes accordingly.

"That the Ombudsman was compelled to take such a proactive position on this matter is evidence of its serious nature. I believe that such a stance reflects the widespread concern over a system in chaos.

"Tensions amongst detainees at Christmas Island and detention facilities around the country have been growing and the Government's continued announcement of new centres is no remedy for this. We welcome the Ombudsman giving consideration to the events and existing procedures that preceded the unrest on Christmas Island.

"RCOA hopes that this upcoming investigation by the Ombudsman is one which presents the Government with alternative approaches it will adopt with a view to avoiding further tension and individual suffering in detention.

"Recently we have seen that suffering extend to the loss of life with five suicides in just over six months. The indefinite and hopeless nature of detention is certainly a factor in such circumstances. We welcome the Ombudsman's concern into matters of appropriate facilities and programs to prevent such tragedies from occurring in Australia's immigration detention centres" Mr Power said.

**Media enquiries: Sophie Peer 0488 035 535**

Suite 4A6, 410 Elizabeth Street  
Surry Hills NSW 2010 Australia  
Phone: (02) 9211-9333 • Fax: (02) 9211-9288  
info@refugeecouncil.org.au • Web: www.refugeecouncil.org.au  
Incorporated in ACT • ABN 87 956 673 083

The Refugee Council of Australia represents  
non-government organisations and  
individuals working with and for refugees  
in Australia and around the world