



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.



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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 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 (Australian Council of Social Services)
ADRA Australia
Amnesty International Australia
Apollo Bay Rural Australians for Refugees
Armidale Sanctuary Humanitarian Settlement
Asylum Insight
Asylum Seekers Centre
Australian Baptist Ministries
Australian Churches Refugee Taskforce
Australian Coalition to End Immigration Detention of Children
Australian Council For International Development
Australian Catholic Social Justice Council
Australian Education Union
Australian Lawyers Alliance
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



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Balmain for Refugees
Baptist Care Australia
Bayside Refugee Advocacy and Support Association
Befriend a child in Detention
Blue Mountains Refugee Support Group
B'nai B'rith Australia/New Zealand
Braidwood Rural Australians for Refugees
Bridge for Asylum Seekers Foundation
Brigidine Asylum Seekers Project
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



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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
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
House of Hospitality, Broadmeadow
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
Mercy Works
Missionaries of the Sacred Heart
Multicultural Services Centre of WA
NSW Council of Civil Liberties
NSW Council of Social Services
NSW Teachers Federation



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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, Wagga Wagga
Presentation Sisters Western Australia
Promoting Healthy Outcomes for Refugees Inc.
Quakers, WA Regional Meeting
Refugee Advice and Casework Service
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



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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
Western Region Ethnic Communities Council
Women's Health in the South East
World Vision Australia
Wyndham Community and Education Centre