



## 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:*

<b>Refugee Council of Australia (statement coordinator)</b>
<b>A Just Cause</b>
<b>ACOSS (Australian Council of Social Services)</b>
<b>ADRA Australia</b>
<b>Amnesty International Australia</b>
<b>Apollo Bay Rural Australians for Refugees</b>
<b>Armidale Sanctuary Humanitarian Settlement</b>
<b>Asylum Insight</b>
<b>Asylum Seekers Centre</b>
<b>Australian Baptist Ministries</b>
<b>Australian Churches Refugee Taskforce</b>
<b>Australian Coalition to End Immigration Detention of Children</b>
<b>Australian Council For International Development</b>
<b>Australian Catholic Social Justice Council</b>
<b>Australian Education Union</b>
<b>Australian Lawyers Alliance</b>
<b>Australian Lawyers for Human Rights</b>
<b>Australian National Committee on Refugee Women</b>
<b>Australian Refugee Association</b>
<b>Ballarat Refugee and Asylum Seeker Support Network (BRASSN)</b>
<b>Ballarat Community Health</b>
<b>Ballina Region for Refugees</b>



# Refugee Council of Australia

<b>Balmain for Refugees</b>
<b>Baptist Care Australia</b>
<b>Bayside Refugee Advocacy and Support Association</b>
<b>Befriend a child in Detention</b>
<b>Blue Mountains Refugee Support Group</b>
<b>B'nai B'rith Australia/New Zealand</b>
<b>Braidwood Rural Australians for Refugees</b>
<b>Bridge for Asylum Seekers Foundation</b>
<b>Brigidine Asylum Seekers Project</b>
<b>Brisbane Refugee and Asylum Seeker Support Network (BRASS)</b>
<b>Buddies Refugee Support Group, Sunshine Coast</b>
<b>Burmese Rohingya Community in Australia</b>
<b>Caritas Australia</b>
<b>Castlemaine Rural Australians for Refugees</b>
<b>Catholic Archdiocese of Melbourne, Office of Justice and Peace</b>
<b>Catholic Archdiocese of Sydney, Justice and Peace Office</b>
<b>Catholic Diocese of Darwin</b>
<b>Catholic Diocese of Toowoomba, Social Justice Commission</b>
<b>Catholics in Coalition for Justice and Peace</b>
<b>Catholic Justice and Peace Commission, Archdiocese of Brisbane</b>
<b>Catholic Social Services Australia</b>
<b>Centacare South West NSW</b>
<b>Centrecare (WA)</b>
<b>Centre for Human Rights Education, Curtin University</b>
<b>Centre for Refugee Research, University of NSW</b>
<b>Children's Rights International</b>
<b>ChildFund Australia</b>
<b>ChilOut</b>
<b>Coalition for Asylum Seekers, Refugees and Detainees</b>



# Refugee Council of Australia

<b>cohealth</b>
<b>Combined Refugee Action Group, Geelong</b>
<b>Common Grace</b>
<b>Communicare</b>
<b>Compassion and Justice for Refugees, South Australia</b>
<b>Conference of Leaders of Religious Institutes in NSW</b>
<b>Corangamite Grandmothers against Detention of Refugee Children</b>
<b>Cyber Christian Community WA</b>
<b>DASSAN (Darwin Asylum Seeker Support Network)</b>
<b>Dominican Sisters of Eastern Australia and the Solomon Islands</b>
<b>Edmund Rice Centre Mirrabooka</b>
<b>Edmund Rice Centre Sydney</b>
<b>Franciscan Missionaries of Mary, Australia</b>
<b>Geelong Interchurch Social Justice Network</b>
<b>Grandmothers Against the Detention of Refugee Children</b>
<b>House of Hospitality, Broadmeadow</b>
<b>Institute of Sisters of Mercy, Australia and Papua New Guinea</b>
<b>Islamic Council of Victoria</b>
<b>Jesuit Refugee Service Australia</b>
<b>Jesuit Social Services</b>
<b>Jews for Refugees</b>
<b>Liberty Victoria</b>
<b>Melbourne Catholic Migrant and Refugee Office</b>
<b>Mercy Works</b>
<b>Missionaries of the Sacred Heart</b>
<b>Multicultural Services Centre of WA</b>
<b>NSW Council of Civil Liberties</b>
<b>NSW Council of Social Services</b>
<b>NSW Teachers Federation</b>



# Refugee Council of Australia

<b>NT Council of Social Service</b>
<b>Oxfam Australia</b>
<b>Pax Christi Australia (NSW)</b>
<b>Plan International Australia</b>
<b>Presentation People's Social Justice Group, Ballina</b>
<b>Presentation Sisters Queensland</b>
<b>Presentation Sisters, Wagga Wagga</b>
<b>Presentation Sisters Western Australia</b>
<b>Promoting Healthy Outcomes for Refugees Inc.</b>
<b>Quakers, WA Regional Meeting</b>
<b>Refugee Advice and Casework Service</b>
<b>Refugee Advocacy Network</b>
<b>Refugee Advocacy Service of South Australia Inc (RASSA)</b>
<b>Rural Australians for Refugees, Bellingen and Nambucca Districts</b>
<b>Rural Australians for Refugees, Daylesford and District</b>
<b>Rural Australians for Refugees, Armidale</b>
<b>Safe Asylum</b>
<b>Sanctuary Australia Foundation</b>
<b>SCALES Community Legal Centre</b>
<b>SCARF Inc, Illawarra</b>
<b>Sydney Justice and Peace Coalition</b>
<b>Sisters of Mercy Parramatta</b>
<b>Sisters of St Joseph</b>
<b>Sisters of the Good Samaritans</b>
<b>Social Responsibilities Commission, Anglican Diocese of Perth</b>
<b>South Australian Refugee Health Network</b>
<b>South Australian Council for Civil Liberties</b>
<b>St Vincent de Paul Society National Council of Australia</b>
<b>Surf Coast Rural Australians for Refugees</b>



# Refugee Council of Australia

<b>Tasmanian Asylum Seeker Support</b>
<b>The Tasmania Opportunity</b>
<b>Victorian Arabic Social Services</b>
<b>Townsville Multicultural Support Group</b>
<b>UNICEF Australia</b>
<b>Uniting Church In Australia</b>
<b>Victorian Council of Social Service</b>
<b>Victorian Council of Churches</b>
<b>VOICE Australia</b>
<b>Warrnambool Rural Australians for Refugees</b>
<b>Welcome to Australia</b>
<b>Western Region Ethnic Communities Council</b>
<b>Women's Health in the South East</b>
<b>World Vision Australia</b>
<b>Wyndham Community and Education Centre</b>