

15 February 2016

The Hon Malcolm Turnbull MP
Prime Minister
Commonwealth of Australia
PO Box 6022
Parliament of Australia
Canberra 2600

Dear Prime Minister,

We refer to your government's decision to move 267 people from Australia to the Nauru Offshore Processing Centre – many of whom are children and 37 of whom are infants.

As a matter of urgency, cohealth calls on the government to:

- halt the transfer of Australian-born babies and their families to detention on Nauru;
- release all children and their families currently in detention into the Australian community;
- repeal all laws that allow for children to be detained; and
- appoint an independent guardian for children seeking asylum to ensure their best interests are upheld.

cohealth is one of Australia's largest community health services. We work from a rights-based model which prioritises groups at risk of poorer health outcomes and focuses on the social determinants of health. We provide health services to large numbers of refugees and asylum seekers in Melbourne's north and west.

As such, we have seen directly the detrimental health impacts of detention. The harm caused by detention compounds the disadvantages faced by refugees and asylum seekers, which frequently include poverty, homelessness, trauma, and lack of access to education and other basic social services. The effects are exacerbated for children. As a provider of health and social services to refugee communities, our organisation is extremely concerned that the policy of detaining children indefinitely is causing significant adverse impacts on their health and wellbeing.

By endorsing a policy of mandatory detention, your government is failing to provide these children with the care they need to reach their potential. This failure jeopardises their health and wellbeing and impedes their ability to start a new life.

As an organisation we see daily the harm and detrimental health and mental impacts that asylum seekers experience. As the Prime Minister your government has the authority to repeal laws that place children at risk of detention and to provide these children with the care and support they require.

Yours sincerely,



Lyn Morgain
Chief Executive
cohealth