

## End offshore processing

### Key messages

- ◆ Every child has the right to grow up in a safe, stable home, connected to family, community and culture, with the care and support needed to advance their health, education, wellbeing and development
- ◆ The offshore processing policy of the Australian government is actively causing harm and breaching the human rights obligations owed to people seeking asylum, including children
- ◆ The Centre reaffirms our position on this issue; we call for an end to offshore processing and the immediate transfer of all children, families and individuals to Australia

*'This is the only situation I've come across where it is deliberate government policy which is causing the pain and suffering of these children'*

AMA paediatric representative Dr Paul Bauert<sup>1</sup>

Every child has the right to grow up in a safe, stable home, connected to family, community and culture, with the care and support needed to advance their health, education, wellbeing and development. But our treatment of people seeking asylum flies in the face of Australian values; offshore processing deprives people of hope and their human rights at a time when they most need support. We can change this by urging government to immediately transfer all children and their families to Australia.

We are deeply concerned about the repeated reports of distress, hopelessness, trauma, family separation and lack of support being experienced by children on Nauru leading to depression, suicide attempts, self-harm, traumatic withdrawal syndrome, and developmental impacts.

In any decisions affecting children, the best interests of the child must be paramount. This right is enshrined in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, to which Australia is a signatory and which applies to all children, including those seeking asylum.<sup>2</sup>

The government has a responsibility to protect and uphold the rights of children no matter where in the world they come from. However, the Australian government is in clear breach of Australia's human rights obligations.

As the peak body for over 100 child and family service organisations and individuals supporting the wellbeing of children, young people and families, the Centre for Excellence in Child and Family Welfare knows the devastating impact that trauma can have on the lifelong wellbeing and development of children. We also know that keeping families together, therapeutic support and a safe, hopeful environment are critical to improving life outcomes.

**The Centre reaffirms our position that offshore processing must end.** It is unethical, unjust and a violation of human rights. The safety and wellbeing of children and families must always be paramount in our policies, decisions and actions.

October 2018

## The Centre asks government

- ◆ To immediately bring all people seeking asylum who have been subjected to offshore processing on Nauru and Manus Island to Australia, and provide them with adequate support to meet their developmental and wellbeing needs while their refugee status is being processed or while awaiting suitable resettlement

## Recent developments

In the last six weeks alone, we have seen a groundswell of calls for an end to offshore processing from...

- ◆ [The UN Refugee Agency](#), UNHCR – who have urged the Australian government to end offshore processing at a Geneva press briefing
- ◆ The [Australian Medical Association](#) (AMA) – who made a public statement condemning the detention of children on Nauru and describing the situation as a humanitarian emergency. The AMA also sent a [letter](#) to the Prime Minister Scott Morrison calling for urgent action
- ◆ 6550 doctors – who have signed an [open letter](#) to Prime Minister Scott Morrison calling on the government to transfer all children and their families off Nauru for medical care
- ◆ [Médecins Sans Frontières Australia](#) (MSF) – the world’s leading medical humanitarian aid organisation, who have been providing free mental health services to support the overwhelmed Australian-funded supports. The MSF have been forced by the Nauruan government to halt support, claiming that their services are ‘no longer required’. MSF dispute this claim, stating that the situation on Nauru is ‘beyond desperate’. MSF are calling for an immediate end to Australia’s offshore processing policy
- ◆ The [Asylum Seeker Resource Centre](#) – whose tireless legal and political advocacy to get kids to Australia for medical treatment has resulted in 38 children being brought to Australia
- ◆ [Academics for Refugees](#) – who have joined the call to end immigration detention under the hashtag #NoMoreHarm
- ◆ [The Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Psychiatrists](#) (RANZCP) – who have restated their opposition to children being held in immigration detention, stating that these facilities are detrimental to the health and development of children with the potential to cause long-term harm
- ◆ The [#KidsOffNauru](#) campaign – which is calling for all children to be brought to Australia by Universal Children’s Day on 20 November; because locking up children is never the answer. The campaign currently has 131, 149 signatories

...and momentum is growing every day.

Read the Centre's 2016 position paper on Children in Immigration Detention [here](#).

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<sup>1</sup> Staff and agencies 2018, ‘[Almost 6,000 doctors sign letter to PM demanding children be taken off Nauru](#)’, *The Guardian*, 15 October.

<sup>2</sup> United Nations 1989, Convention on the rights of the child, viewed 4<sup>th</sup> September 2018, <<https://www.ohchr.org/EN/ProfessionalInterest/Pages/CRC.aspx>>.