I have picked up a student from my school from a detention centre and have found the environment to be very unpleasant.

There is high cyclone fencing around the centre and the young people are ‘housed’ in shipping containers. The staff at the centre have at times been very officious in their manner and sometimes rude.
Provision of education, recreation, maternal and infant health services

- Is formal education available to children? Please describe the types of education that are available. Is it appropriate for the age, the educational level and needs of the child?
- Are there playgrounds and play equipment for children?
- Can you describe the medical services and support that is available for expectant mothers and new mothers? Can you describe the medical support for babies and infants? Do you think these services are appropriate?

The young people I am referring to here have been allowed to attend school. However, their attendance is dependent on:

Not having appointments with case managers, other staff on that day

Not being in "lockdown": students have not been allowed to attend school from the detention centre if there has been a disturbance overnight.

This clearly disrupts their learning, which has already been severely impacted on and disrupted by their life in their country of origin and by being in detention.

The detention centre does not inform us when they are not allowing the child to come to school.

Asylum seeker students at my school who come from a detention centre are not allowed to participate in school excursions, or other learning experiences outside of the school grounds, further disadvantaged them and giving them a sense of not belonging to the school.
The guardianship of unaccompanied children in detention in Australia

- What care and welfare services are available for children who arrive in Australia without parents or family members?
- Are the supports adequate?
- Is closed detention appropriate for unaccompanied minors? How can they be best supported?
- The Minister for Immigration and Border Protection is the legal guardian for unaccompanied children in detention – is this an appropriate arrangement?

Closed detention is completely inappropriate for unaccompanied minors. They should at worst, be in community detention facilities, or preferable, be allowed to live with families/individuals who are able to be "the place of detention' while processing of claims proceeds.

At my school there are families and teachers who would support these asylum seekers to live in a normal environment while they wait to be 'processed', but this has not been an option for them and so they have to return to detention each afternoon.
Progress that has been made during the 10 years
(since the Commission's 2004 report: A last resort? National Inquiry into Children in Immigration Detention)

- Have alternatives to detention such as community detention and the granting of visas been sufficiently utilised in the past 10 years?
- Have the living conditions for children in detention facilities improved in the past 10 years? What have been the changes?
- Have there been changes to laws and policies dealing with children in immigration detention to ensure that they comply with the Convention on the Rights of the Child?

As mentioned above, community detention options are not properly pursued in my opinion. The living conditions in the detention centre are too heavily regulated to allow the young person to engage properly with education. For instance, our asylum seeker students are not allowed to take a school laptop into the detention centre with them and their access to a computer and the internet is very limited in the centre. This severely limits their opportunities to complete school work, email their teachers their completed work, etc.
Submission to AHRC Inquiry into Children in Immigration Detention

Dear Sir/Madam

I have already put a submission in to the AHRC using the submission proforma, but as I felt restricted by the questions, I have decided to put in a more detailed submission of my experiences as a secondary school teacher who has taught students who were in detention in the past, and students who are currently in detention, but allowed to attend school.

In relation to students I have taught who have been held in immigration detention, I have observed the following impacts:

- **Lost time:** One of my students spent 18 months locked up in Indonesia followed by 18 months of detention in Australia. This has clearly impacted on his learning in terms of the years of learning that he has missed, which has compounded the effects of disrupted learning in his home country and through his escape and journey to Australia. This causes significant problems in relation to sequential learning.

- **Impact on capacity to learn:** One of my students reports problems with retaining information since his experience of detention. He says he used to be a quick learner, but has experienced problems with his memory since commencing proper schooling in Australia which he puts down to the disruption to his schooling and the horrors he witnessed in detention.

- **All of the students I have taught who were, or still are in detention, have witnessed horrific incidents of self-harm, attempted suicide and violence between detainees.** This has clearly impacted on them, and all have had counselling within and outside of the school.

- **One of my students who is currently in detention was previously held in community detention.** He has reported that he was assaulted by a worker in front of other young people in the community detention house. The worker then reported the student as being the instigator of the assault. The young man was later arrested by the police who used capsicum spray on him, hand-cuffed him and returned to him to MITA in Broadmeadows. He spent 6 months with no information in relation to the charges, and no opportunity to make his own claim of assault against the worker. After 6 months he was visited at MITA by the police who explained that the claim of the worker had been unsubstantiated, and that formal charges would not be laid. He was told he was receiving an official warning though, and when he questioned this, he was told it was a mere formality and would not impact on the processing of his refugee status. He is still in MITA and has not been returned to community detention, even though there was clearly no case on which to charge him.

- **Students who are in locked detention (MITA) who attend my school are not allowed access to laptops, even though the school has provided them with one. This makes it impossible for them to access online resources required to complete assessment tasks.** The computer access at the detention centre is limited and the internet is apparently very slow, making it useless for learning purposes. They are also often absent, as when there is unrest in the detention centre, students are not allowed to attend school. The centre makes no effort to inform the school of this, and students’ learning is further compromised by irregular attendance in classes. Students are also held back from attending school by immigration interviews and caseworker meetings.
While I understand that this is hearsay, and not the story of a student I currently teach, I think it is important to include another situation that I have been told about. A young person in community detention was taken out by a worker to a gay club where he was sexually assaulted by the friend of the worker, who had gone out with them. When the young person resisted the sexual advances being made, he was reported, and returned to locked detention at MITA.

In the likely event that the young people locked in detention will be processed as genuine refugees and will be want to attend school or participate in the workforce, it is very clear that the experience of detention has a devastating effect on their capacity to do so. The physical, emotional and psychological effect of having to flee persecution is compounded by the experiences that young people have in detention, and makes assimilation into Australian schools, the workplace and the general community so much more difficult than it needs to be.