



Refugee Council of Australia

SUBMISSION TO THE AUSTRALIAN HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION

RESPONSE TO THE NATIONAL INQUIRY INTO CHILDREN IN DETENTION 2014

The Refugee Council of Australia (RCOA) is the national umbrella body for refugees, asylum seekers and the organisations and individuals who work with them, representing over 185 organisations and over 700 individual members. RCOA promotes the adoption of humane, lawful and constructive policies by governments and communities in Australia and internationally towards refugees, asylum seekers and humanitarian entrants. RCOA consults regularly with its members and refugee background communities and this submission is informed by their views.

RCOA welcomes the opportunity to provide feedback on the Australian Human Rights Commission (the Commission's) National Inquiry into Children in Detention 2014 but is dismayed that this Inquiry is necessary in 2014. Since the introduction of mandatory immigration detention in 1992 there have been scores of inquiries, investigations and reports in relation to children in detention and immigration detention more broadly.¹ RCOA has made dozens of submissions, reports and statements, as well as provided significant testimony over the past two decades. There is overwhelming evidence citing the damaging and deleterious impact that detention has on children and adults alike.

RCOA is pleased that the Commission has been able to make face-to-face visits to immigration detention facilities to speak with the children and families held in detention. The stories and experiences of people held in detention should be held in high regard, as should the submissions and testimony of experts and service providers observing the impact of the current and past detention policies and practices. RCOA is not an expert in child welfare or well-being, so our submission instead focuses on a compilation of related materials and the views of our members.

RCOA's submission briefly addresses the terms of reference outlined by the Commission:

- the appropriateness of facilities in which children are detained;
- the impact of the length of detention on children;
- measures to ensure the safety of children;
- provision of education, recreation, maternal and infant health services;
- the separation of families across detention facilities in Australia;
- the guardianship of unaccompanied children in detention in Australia;
- assessments conducted prior to transferring children to be detained in 'regional processing countries'; and
- 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*.

In brief, RCOA agrees with experts and those that have endured prolonged detention that detention causes long-term developmental and mental health problems, not just during the time of detention but for significant time after. The negative impacts of prolonged indefinite detention

¹ See RCOA's 2008 submission to the Joint Standing Committee on Migration for a list of over 40 inquiries and investigations, available at <http://www.refugeecouncil.org.au/r/sub/0808-Detention.pdf>

on the health and wellbeing of asylum seekers is well-documented, and the evidence is comprehensive, consistent and irrefutable. This overwhelming evidence base reveals the harmful effects of immigration detention on children and adults, and yet successive governments have ignored this comprehensive research and advice.

It is RCOA's hope that this Inquiry can provide further evidence of the damage that the successive Australian governments' commitment to immigration detention of children causes and perpetuates. RCOA calls on the Government to enact the quick and permanent dismantling of the immigration detention of children.

1. Introduction

1.1. The impacts of immigration detention on children are well-established. There is clear and consistent evidence that:

- holding people in detention unnecessarily and for indefinite periods can have serious negative impacts on their health (particularly their mental health) and wellbeing, and can hamper recover from pre-arrival experiences of torture and trauma;
- the negative impacts of detention worsen as time spent in detention lengthens;
- the restrictiveness of the detention environment and often remote locations of detention facilities hamper access to adequate education and health services and community support;
- detention can have particularly egregious impacts on children, resulting in developmental delays and serious mental health issues; and
- community-based alternatives to detention are practical, humane and effective, provided that asylum seekers have adequate support to ensure a decent standard of living.

1.2. Despite this knowledge:

- detention continues to be used as a measure of first rather than last resort;
- asylum seekers who pose no identifiable threat to the community continue to be held in detention arbitrarily;
- there is still no time limit on detention and no process for regular judicial review of decisions to detain;
- children continue to be held in detention in large numbers; and
- current alternatives to detention do not ensure a decent standard of living for asylum seekers and are not being used at all for asylum seekers subject to offshore processing.

2. The appropriateness of facilities in which children are detained

2.1. One of the most troubling aspects of Australia's detention regime is the use of closed detention for children. Successive governments have claimed that no children are held in immigration detention centres; however, when the Pontville Immigration Detention Centre was transitioned to an Alternative Place of Detention (APOD) in order to detain unaccompanied children, the only change made was the deactivation of electronic detection systems.

2.2. RCOA cannot accept the suggestion that deactivating the electronic detention system somehow converts a secure Immigration Detention Centre detention facility into a "child-friendly" APOD. The claim that APODs are somehow different to secure detention centres – and therefore more suitable for children – is ludicrous.

2.3. Children in Immigration Residential Housing, Immigration Transit Accommodation and Alternative Places of Detention – the detention facilities that the Government deems suitable – have their movements restricted to only leave the facility for school (only if

they are enrolled) and sometimes for excursions. The limitations to the freedom of movement for children is unnecessary and punitive.

3. The impact of the length of detention on children

- 3.1. There is significant and consistent evidence about the long-term impacts of detention on children, including developmental delays, a range of mental health issues (depression, anxiety, post-traumatic stress disorder, memory loss and difficulties concentrating), erosion of trust in authorities and even self-harm. These impacts can also compound the effects of, and hamper recovery from, pre-arrival experiences of trauma.
- 3.2. Children whose relatives have been through similarly traumatic experiences may experience knock-on effects including family conflict or breakdown, the distress of witnessing the impacts of trauma on parents and other relatives and even acts of self-harm.
- 3.3. The documentation of self-harm and suicidal ideation among children in Australian detention facilities is alarming and a cause of great concern for RCOA. Freedom of Information documents from the Department of Immigration revealed over 25 incidents of self-harm among children aged 9-17 over the period of just one year (2010-11) at one detention facility.² While the specific details of children in these reports are not known, many children held in detention facilities in Darwin have spent prolonged periods of time in closed detention, including many who have spent nine months to over a year. The extended time in detention has compounded their trauma and caused disturbing actions of self-harm.
- 3.4. In counter to the harmful impacts of detention, children and young people are often remarkably resilient and can recover from the trauma of detention. However, a core prerequisite for recovery from traumatic experiences is the establishment of safety and security. The environment into which children and young people are being released is anything but secure.
- 3.5. Asylum seekers living in the community currently face lengthy delays in processing, limited access to support services, forced dependency due to denial of work rights, destitution due to inadequate income support and access to few if any educational and training opportunities. If these asylum seekers are eventually granted some form of visa, it is likely to be a temporary one. They also face indefinite and possibly permanent separation from family members and a negative and often hostile public debate on asylum seeker issues.
- 3.6. In short, the current policy environment is creating great uncertainty, stress, frustration and hardship for asylum seekers and is inimical to positive mental health and recovery from trauma. It has been difficult enough for adults to confront this environment, let alone children. Unaccompanied children perhaps face the greatest challenges of all, particularly if they have recently turned 18 and been exited from more intensive support programs. RCOA is concerned that the flow-on effects of detention will be exacerbated for children when they are released and do not find safety and security in the community.

4. Measures to ensure the safety of children

- 4.1. RCOA maintains that the impacts that the impacts of detention on children must also be viewed in light of their pre-arrival experiences. Many of the children detained in Australia and offshore would have already lived in situations of great insecurity, uncertainty and fear and in which they and their families had little control over their lives.

² See http://dassan.weebly.com/uploads/8/2/7/1/8271022/foi_documents.pdf for copies of the FOI documents.

- 4.2. Some children may have experienced serious trauma (such as torture, armed conflict and violence, physical and/or sexual abuse and the death of loved ones) and some may have already been held in immigration detention in other countries.
- 4.3. Education is typically disrupted by forced displacement and some children (particularly those born into a situation of displacement) may never have had the opportunity to attend formal education at all. Health issues may also go unaddressed for years in situations of displacement.
- 4.4. Holding these children in an environment of pervasive uncertainty, in which they have little independence or control over their lives, where access to educational opportunities and health services may be limited and in which they are surrounded by many other traumatised individuals, is not only distressing in itself but further compounds the trauma experienced by these children prior to their arrival in Australia. In short, children are not safe in detention.
- 4.5. RCOA also has been disturbed by reports that the mechanisms to ensure the safety of children are blocked or denied to asylum seeker children in closed detention. The Victorian Principal Commissioner for Children and Young People, Bernie Geary, attempted to visit children detained at the Melbourne Immigration Transit Accommodation (MITA) in October 2013 in order to meet with children, parents and young person detained there and was denied entry.³ Mr Geary's assertion that he had remit over all children and young people in Victoria – even those detained at a Commonwealth detention facility – was repudiated by the Department of Immigration and the Minister for Immigration. Similar stories of jurisdictional limitations have also been raised in relation to other state and territory Children's Commissioners.

5. Provision of education, recreation, maternal and infant health services

- 5.1. Several reports, letters and submissions regarding the appropriateness of educational opportunities and health facilities for children and families in closed detention have been made public and presented to contracted service providers and the Department of Immigration.

Health services

- 5.2. Several of these recent reports and statements related to health provision for mothers, infants and children in immigration detention have been made by medical experts.⁴ Their observations, analysis and recommendations about these health services outline disturbing practices that would not be acceptable in the wider Australian community. The deficiencies in the current system include:
 - Inadequate primary healthcare;
 - A dearth of ante- and post-natal care for pregnant women and mothers, including insufficient equipment (i.e. ultrasound machines), inadequate material needs and lack of obstetrics specialists;
 - Insufficient mental health provision, including a lack of full-time psychiatric services in several immigration detention facilities both onshore and offshore;

³ See <http://www.theage.com.au/federal-politics/political-news/child-guardian-rebuff-20131014-2viv9.html>

⁴ For example, see the November 2013 ChilOut report, authored by ChilOut and two leading obstetrics researchers, detailing the maternal and infant health services for women detained in Darwin (available at <http://media.virbcdn.com/files/11/7ab4e1dd0c5ca616-DarwinReportF.pdf>); the statements made by the Royal Australasian College of Physicians on the right to healthcare for asylum seekers in Australia (available at <http://www.racp.edu.au/index.cfm?objectid=D7FAA694-E371-4AB9-BE41B937879A52E1>); the 92 page letter from 15 doctors to the International Health and Medical Service in November 2013 that forensically detailed the potential medical neglect occurring on Christmas Island (full letter available at <http://www.theguardian.com/world/interactive/2014/jan/13/christmas-island-doctors-letter-of-concern-in-full>); and statements by the Australian Medical Association (AMA) and research published by the Medical Journal of Australia (MJA) demonstrating that people in immigration detention do not receive adequate healthcare (see the AMA's media statements and transcripts at <https://ama.com.au/media> and the MJA research available at <https://www.mja.com.au/insight/2013/48/serious-gaps-detainees-health-care>)

- A lack of paediatric specialists, including practitioners who do not have training in advanced paediatric life support nor experience in paediatric mental health service provision;
 - An insufficient Health Induction Assessment (HIA) process for children and adults that does not meet doctors' standards, performed in a way that neglects patient care and dignity;
 - Insufficient health screening for children, leading to primary health issues not being screened and therefore going unobserved, with particular concern for Infectious diseases, such as malaria, blood born viruses and common parasitic infections, as well as nutritional deficiencies;
 - Incomplete documentation and health records driven by poor data management and information systems; and
 - The lack of regular education for children and the impact this has on children's health and well-being.
- 5.3. Both the Royal Australasian College of Physicians (RACP) and the Australian Medical Association have made several recommendations repeatedly about the prolonged detention of children. These recommendations include calling for the immediate transfer of children seeking asylum and their families to a community setting; that under no circumstances should children be separated from their families; no children are to be held in regional processing centres on Manus Island and Nauru; undertake immediate and sustained efforts to improve the efficacy and speed of the assessment process for all detainees to eliminate prolonged detention.⁵
- 5.4. Since late 2012, RCOA has heard regularly from concerned members and individuals about the treatment of pregnant women in immigration detention, both onshore and offshore. At 25 February 2014 there were 53 pregnant women detained on Christmas Island and 43 pregnant women in mainland immigration detention facilities.⁶ With the medical experts advising about the inadequacies in maternal health services for women detained, RCOA is concerned about the welfare of these women and their babies.

Education and recreational activities

- 5.5. For children detained in remote detention facilities in Leonora, Curtin and on Christmas Island, their access to education, excursions and even visitors is severely limited by both the location and the lack of education arrangements with the Western Australian state government.
- 5.6. The lack of a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between the WA state government and the federal government on education has meant that children detained in facilities located in WA have been unable to enrol in state schools. All school-age children in Australia are required to attend school, but this lack of a MoU has meant that children cannot often attend school and suffer further disrupted learning.
- 5.7. Volunteer visitors, a source of friendship and comfort for many children and families detained in Australia, are rare, as it is very difficult to gain access to the remotely-located facilities in Western Australia.
- 5.8. Remoteness is just one aspect that can contribute to the inappropriate conditions that children face in detention facilities, as even when detention facilities are located in or near metropolitan areas in Australia, the situation can be dire. RCOA has heard from members and former detainees about the crowded conditions that children and families live in; the lack of privacy; the lack of appropriate playspace for younger children; insufficient activities for children and parents; inadequate clothing, nappies, bottles and

⁵ See RACG 2013, *Ensuring the health of asylum seekers while they are being processed is an issue of rights*, Media release 23 August, available at <http://www.racp.edu.au/index.cfm?objectid=D7FAA694-E371-4AB9-BE41B937879A52E1>

⁶ http://www.aph.gov.au/~media/Estimates/Live/legcon_ctte/estimates/add_1314/DIBP/AE14-79.pdf

medicine for babies, breastfeeding mothers and children; and delayed or no enrolment into school for children.

- 5.9. This information will not be new to the Commission, as its own investigations of immigration detention facilities in 2010, 2011 and 2012 uncovered similar stories.

6. The separation of families across detention facilities in Australia

- 6.1. RCOA has heard regularly from its members, former refugees and people still in the process of seeking protection about the separation of family members across the Australian mainland detention network, Christmas Island and offshore processing centres. While instances of separation of pregnant women from their spouses and children to order for the women to receive perinatal care in Australia has slowed or ceased, that the Government initiated this practice is still troubling.
- 6.2. RCOA has also heard from many people in the community about continued separation from family due to detention in offshore processing or due to family members in community or closed detention on mainland Australia. This separation has caused extreme distress about family members and children.
- 6.3. Several studies have found that family separation compromises the psychological health and wellbeing of people from a refugee background. Much of this research suggests that family separation can be the most pervasive source of emotional distress for refugees who have been resettled, and that concern about family is the most common issue associated with depression, anxiety and somatisation. Separation from family has also been shown to compound or exacerbate trauma reactions.⁷
- 6.4. Sadly, family separation is all too common a part of a refugee journey. It is heartbreaking for families when they are separated because of war, conflict and displacement. It is unacceptable when this separation is forced because of Government policy and operation decisions.

7. The guardianship of unaccompanied children in detention in Australia

- 7.1. The role of the Minister for Immigration as legal guardian of unaccompanied minors has long been a matter of concern for RCOA and its members. The guardianship arrangements for unaccompanied minors seeking asylum has been a topic raised by a number of investigations, reports and submissions.
- 7.2. RCOA believes that it is impossible for the Minister to properly discharge his duty as guardian when he is simultaneously responsible for protecting a child's best interests and making decisions about whether or not that child will be detained, granted a visa or sent offshore for processing. Past and present experience has demonstrated that when this conflict occurs, it is typically the child's best interests which are sacrificed.
- 7.3. RCOA has long called for a greater level of support for unaccompanied minors as they move through the asylum process and after a decision is made as to their refugee status. The Minister for Immigration's guardianship obligations under the *Immigration (Guardianship of Children) Act 1946* [IGOC Act] are in conflict with the *Migration Act 1958*, which gives the Minister powers to detain and to determine status. It is not reasonable to give the Minister responsibility simultaneously for guardianship, detention and status determination for the same young people. The current guardianship framework for unaccompanied minors was not designed with asylum seeker children in mind; it was designed for child migrants sent to Australia for safety reasons during the Second World War. The *IGOC Act* needs to be reviewed to resolve this conflict, and a viable alternative system of guardianship is required to ensure that it reflects the actual

⁷ RCOA 2012, Humanitarian family reunion: The building block of good settlement, available at <http://www.refugeecouncil.org.au/r/rpt/2012-Family.pdf>

needs of the children to whom it now most often applies, and to ensure that their best interests can be genuinely considered in decision-making.

7.4. In their *Guidelines on Unaccompanied Children*, the UNHCR recognises that unaccompanied minors need additional support during and after the refugee determination process. The current delegation of guardianship does not ensure that a person who is primarily concerned with the best interests of the child has responsibility for the child for as long as he/she remains in Australia or until the child reaches 18 years old. There is no designated individual who can:

- ensure that the child is properly represented during the refugee status determination procedures and take legal responsibility for signing documents on his/her behalf;
- act as an advocate for the child if there are problems in the refugee status determination process, with welfare or other issues;
- oversee the care and management of the child; and
- ensure that the child is not exposed to abuse or neglect.

7.5. RCOA strongly maintains that the needs of unaccompanied can only be met where there is active oversight by a legal guardian, supplemented by a comprehensive program of care and protection outside of the closed detention system.

8. The assessments conducted prior to transferring children to be detained in ‘regional processing countries’

8.1. It is RCOA’s view that there are no circumstances under which it could be in a child’s best interests to be sent to an offshore processing centre, particularly if they are unaccompanied. The Refugee Council considers the conditions in the detention centres in Nauru and Papua New Guinea to be tantamount to cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment. These environments are completely inappropriate for adults, let alone children.

8.2. RCOA believes that the only circumstances under which it is acceptable to act against a child’s best interests is when doing so would protect the rights of others (e.g. if a young person has committed a serious crime which necessitates some form of detention). We do not believe that keeping children in detention solely on the basis of their immigration status or sending children to offshore processing centres in any way protects the rights of others.

8.3. RCOA does not accept successive governments’ argument that its treatment of asylum seeker children can be justified on the basis that it will protect the best interests of other children by deterring asylum seekers from undertaking dangerous boat journeys. It is not acceptable to mistreat children on this basis. It would not be considered permissible, for example, to deny a child medical assistance as a “warning” or deterrent to other children.

8.4. RCOA is troubled by the current Government’s commitment to a 48-hour transfer from arrival on Christmas Island to an offshore process centre. This Government-imposed timeframe does not permit the required health assessments and vaccinations required for adults much less for the specialised and additional care required for children. RCOA is also troubled by the potential medical risks caused by giving vaccinations to pregnant women, as well as the lack of appropriate procedures in place to ensure informed consent is granted by the person receiving the vaccinations or medicines.

9. The 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*

9.1. We know that community-based alternatives to detention are practical, humane and effective, provided that asylum seekers have adequate support to ensure a decent

standard of living. These alternatives to closed detention have been readily available to government – but not consistently utilised – since 2005.

- 9.2. In the government-commissioned evaluation of community detention published in 2013, the report concluded that community detention appeared to improve the wellbeing of people as compared to other forms of detention.⁸ The evaluation also found that community detention provided “a more ‘natural’ environment for children, young people, vulnerable adults and families than held detention”; helped parents to return to relatively “normal” family life and gave them the authority to make decisions on behalf of their children; and also afforded children and adults alike the “freedom to make choices about daily life, including what to eat and when, who to visit and how personal time is spent”. Community alternatives provide measureable improvements to people’s lives.
- 9.3. While community alternatives have existed as a viable and even less financially expensive option for over nine years, it is disturbing that there have been continued increases in the number of children detained in closed detention. In recent months, the numbers of children detained in closed facilities in Australia have been higher than ever before. The total of 1992 children detained in July 2013 was significantly higher than the two previous records – 990 children detained as at 4 September 2011 and 842 children detained as at 1 September 2001. While number of children detained in onshore detention facilities has decreased to 833 (as at 30 April 2014), there are now 190 children detained in an offshore processing centre on Nauru. That means that over one thousand (1023) children are still detained in closed immigration detention.⁹

10. A note on Australia’s international obligations

- 10.1. Australia’s detention policies are at odds with the principle that, in all actions concerning children, the best interests of the child shall be a primary consideration. Detaining children solely on the basis of their immigration status is *always* a violation of the rights of the child. The UN Committee on the Rights of the Child has recently called on states to completely cease the detention of children on this basis.¹⁰
- 10.2. In detaining children as a measure of first rather than last resort, without an individualised assessment of whether detention is truly necessary, Australia is failing in its duty to protect the best interests of children in its care.
- 10.3. Australia’s policies, through the example they set to other countries, could actually be placing children at risk rather than saving lives. From our work with NGOs in the Asia-Pacific region, for example, we know that detention policies in other countries are influenced by Australia’s practices.
- 10.4. Australia faces shame and international condemnation if any children detained takes up their recently-afforded opportunity to lodge complaints directly with the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child about their alleged violation of their rights.

11. Conclusion

- 11.1. It clear to the Refugee Council that the issue of children in immigration has been problematic for successive governments. The last inquiry into children in detention resulted in some policy changes to see children released from immigration detention. When numbers of children were again being held in closed detention facilities in 2009-2011, the then Government also made policy changes that resulted in children being

⁸ Katz, I, Doney, G and Mitchell, E. 2013, *Evaluation of the Expansion of the Community Detention Program: Final Report to the Department of Immigration and Citizenship (DIAC)*. Sydney: Social Policy Research Centre, University of New South Wales, p.10.

⁹ Detention statistics available at <http://www.immi.gov.au/About/Pages/detention/about-immigration-detention.aspx?tab=3&heading=immigration-detention-and-community-statistics>; analysis of the numbers of children detained over the years available at <http://www.refugeecouncil.org.au/r/pb/PB1303-Children.pdf>

¹⁰ Details available at <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/CRC/Pages/CRCIndex.aspx>

released from detention. What is clear to RCOA is that without substantive legislative change ensuring that children are not placed and do not remain in immigration detention, the cycle of suffering and unnecessary human and financial costs will continue.

- 11.2. Community alternatives are readily available, and legislative change is now required to ensure that we do not need to hold another inquiry in 2024.

APPENDIX A

Refugee Council of Australia statements related to immigration detention 2000-2014

2014

- Detention centre closures must be accompanied by community alternatives – 8 May 2014
http://www.refugeecouncil.org.au/n/mr/140508_DetentionCentres.pdf
- Australia's asylum policy must change to avoid long-term damage – 5 March 2014
http://www.refugeecouncil.org.au/n/mr/140305_UNHCRStanding.pdf
- Manus Island disturbance a tragedy waiting to happen – 18 February 2014
http://www.refugeecouncil.org.au/n/mr/140218_Manus.pdf
- Mental health risks as asylum seekers face more time in detention – 12 February 2014
http://www.refugeecouncil.org.au/n/mr/140212_Detention.pdf
- Inquiry into Immigration detention of children welcomed – 3 February 2014
http://www.refugeecouncil.org.au/n/mr/140203_ChildDetention.pdf

2013

- Australia must heed UN call to release refugees from indefinite detention – 23 August 2013
http://www.refugeecouncil.org.au/n/mr/130823_Un-asio.pdf
- Enough is Enough: It's Time for a New Approach – 13 August 2013
<http://www.refugeecouncil.org.au/n/mr/130813-NewApproach.pdf>
- Detention of children no longer a last resort – 1 May 2013
http://www.refugeecouncil.org.au/n/mr/130501_ChildrenDetention.pdf
- Government urged to release children from Manus Island Detention – 5 April 2013
http://www.refugeecouncil.org.au/n/mr/130405_BaliProcess.pdf
- Australia must act on UNHCR Report on Manus Island Detention – 4 February 2013
http://www.refugeecouncil.org.au/n/mr/130204_Manus_UNHCR.pdf

2012

- An Unhappy 20th Birthday for Mandatory Detention – 4 May 2012
<http://www.refugeecouncil.org.au/n/mr/120504-Detention-Anniv.pdf>
- Global campaign to end child detention wants 428 video messages from Australian youth – 30 April 2012
<http://www.refugeecouncil.org.au/n/mr/120430-Children-Detention.pdf>

2011

- Manus Island Deal is Pacific Solution 2.0 – 19 August 2011
http://www.refugeecouncil.org.au/news/releases/110819_Manus_MOU.pdf
- Australia-Malaysia deal undermines regional push for protection – 26 July 2011
http://www.refugeecouncil.org.au/news/releases/110726_MalaysiaSigning.pdf
- A better way: A risk-based approach to immigration detention – 24 June 2011

- http://www.refugeecouncil.org.au/news/releases/110624_RW_detention.pdf
- Detention inquiry a good start but action needed – 2 June 2011
http://www.refugeecouncil.org.au/news/releases/110602_Parllnq_det.pdf
- Urgent need for detention reform highlighted yet again – 26 May 2011
http://www.refugeecouncil.org.au/news/releases/110526_AHRC_Vwood.pdf
- Malaysia’s appalling rights record ignored in refugee transfer deal – 8 May 2011
http://www.refugeecouncil.org.au/news/releases/110507_Malaysia_transfer.pdf
- Manus detention plan undermines international cooperation – 6 May 2011
http://www.refugeecouncil.org.au/news/releases/110506_Manus.pdf
- Increase in long-term detention at heart of unrest – 27 April 2011
http://www.refugeecouncil.org.au/news/releases/110427_MigAct_changes.pdf
- Scrutiny of detention welcomed – 14 April 2011
http://www.refugeecouncil.org.au/news/releases/110414_Omb_CI.pdf
- New detention centre: Same problems, more cost – 5 April 2011
http://www.refugeecouncil.org.au/news/releases/110405_Tas_detention.pdf
- Detention needs overhaul, not band-aid fix – 15 March 2011
http://www.refugeecouncil.org.au/news/releases/110315_CI_protests.pdf
- Government gets it wrong with more detention centres – 4 March 2011
http://www.refugeecouncil.org.au/news/releases/110304_Detention.pdf

2010

- Welcome moves to release children from detention – 18 October 2010
http://www.refugeecouncil.org.au/news/releases/101018_Release_of_children.pdf
- Refugee Council urges release of children from detention – 11 October 2010
http://www.refugeecouncil.org.au/news/releases/101011_Release_of_children.pdf
- Time to review detention policy – 17 September 2010
http://www.refugeecouncil.org.au/news/releases/100917_Detention.pdf
- Reopening Curtin a step backwards for reform – 18 April 2010
http://www.refugeecouncil.org.au/news/releases/100418_Curtin.pdf
- Halt in refugee processing creates detention concerns – 9 April 2010
http://www.refugeecouncil.org.au/news/releases/100409_Suspension_of_processing.pdf
- Senator Fielding all wrong on detention – 29 January 2010
http://www.refugeecouncil.org.au/news/releases/100129_Fielding.pdf

2009

- Common sense changes build fairer refugee determination process – 13 May 2009
http://www.refugeecouncil.org.au/news/releases/090513_Budget.pdf

2008

- New high security detention centre unsuitable for asylum seekers – 16 August 2008
http://www.refugeecouncil.org.au/news/releases/080816_Christmas_Island.pdf
- Detention changes help to restore Australia's human rights record – 29 July 2008
http://www.refugeecouncil.org.au/news/releases/080729_Detention_changes.pdf
- Refugee Council welcomes closure of Nauru detention centre – 8 February 2008
http://www.refugeecouncil.org.au/news/releases/080208_Nauru_closure.pdf

2007

- Refugee Council welcomes an end to the failed 'Pacific Solution' – 10 December 2007
http://www.refugeecouncil.org.au/news/releases/071210_Pacific_Solution.pdf
- Closure of Baxter detention centre a welcome step – 17 August 2007
http://www.refugeecouncil.org.au/news/releases/070817_Baxter_closure.pdf

2006

- Refugee Council welcomes Ombudsman's reports into wrongful detention – 6 December 2006
http://www.refugeecouncil.org.au/news/releases/061206_Ombudsman_detention.pdf

2005

- Refugee Council of Australia calls for a judicial inquiry into immigration detention and removals – 15 July 2005
http://www.refugeecouncil.org.au/news/releases/050715_Detention_removals.pdf
- Detention reforms: A missed opportunity – 20 June 2005
http://www.refugeecouncil.org.au/news/releases/050620_Detention_reforms.pdf
- RCOA calls on all political parties to support detention bills – 6 June 2005
http://www.refugeecouncil.org.au/news/releases/050606_Detention_bills.pdf
- Refugee Council responds to creation of new visa class for detainees – 23 March 2005
http://www.refugeecouncil.org.au/news/releases/050323_RPBVs.pdf

2000

- Further criticisms of Australia's mandatory detention policy – 31 July 2000
http://www.refugeecouncil.org.au/news/releases/000731_Mandatory_detention.pdf
- Protests at Woomera detention centre – 9 June 2000
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