TO The Australian Human Rights Commission regarding the National Inquiry into Children in Immigration Detention

I am a young doctor living and working in South West Sydney.

I have treated refugees with sometimes physical, sometimes psychiatric complaints. I have seen parents who have been suicidal suffering from depression and anxiety. I have visited Villawood detention facility and been affected by the degree of hopelessness and depression amongst detainees. The facility is akin to a prison and has a keen impact on the mental health of ADULT detainees; we can only imagine the impact on a developing child that incarceration in such a facility would produce.

I am horrified that as a nation we are detaining CHILDREN.

We know that the formative years are critical to a child's development. Improper attachment and trauma will have lifelong effects. It is a barbaric injustice. Nothing about it is right or necessary.

We risk denying these children the opportunity to establish a sense of belonging to community. They will be freed one day- and when they are, they will be Australian children who we have been harmed irrevocably.

We can treat diabetes. We can cure pneumonia. We can't fix the psychiatric & behavioural problems that this type of trauma will cause.

Dr Zainib Cheema