



AUSTRALIAN CATHOLIC BISHOPS CONFERENCE

Australian Catholic Migrant and Refugee Office



A Dark day for Australia as the Children in Immigration Detention report is released

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Media Release**

On 11 February 2015, the Australian Human Rights Commissioner's (AHRC) National Inquiry into Children in Immigration Detention report was tabled. With that a dark cloud of shame has set over Australia. It is now public knowledge that the Australian Government deliberately detains children in dangerous places that have subsequently led to innumerable cases of mental illness, development delays, sexual assaults and self-harm.

The report is collated from interviews with 1,129 children and families, 41 witnesses at five public hearings, a total of 239 submissions received from schools, medical service providers and NGOs and observations from internationally recognised medical experts. The findings in this report on children in detention leave no doubt about its credibility.

The AHRC emphasises that Australia is the only country in the world that practises the mandatory and indefinite detention of children. This is a clear violation of their rights under the Convention for the Rights of Children.

As a consequence of prolonged periods of detention the report found that 34 per cent of children were diagnosed with serious mental disorders compared to two per cent in Australia. Further evidence shows that a startling 105 children were on suicide watch, 10 of these children were under the age of 10 years old.

The Australian Catholic Migrant and Refugee Office has continuously advocated against the detention of children seeking asylum in Australia. The findings of this inquiry are no surprise. However, the Director of the Australian Catholic Migrant and Refugee Office, Fr Maurizio Pettena acknowledged, "it is with deep sadness that we read the findings of the report on children in detention".

"The world's most vulnerable children are being deliberately detained and harmed for seeking asylum. This is barbaric. The Australian Government has thoroughly failed in its duty to care for these children," he stressed.

Fr Pettena urged the Government to take full responsibility and release the remaining 800 children in community detention and on Nauru. "All eyes are now on Australia, to see how we as a nation respond to this inquiry."

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