



21 March 2012

No child should learn the three R's behind bars

In October 2010, the Federal Government announced it would remove most children out of immigration detention facilities and into the community.

Now it's 2012 and it's taking far too long to place children in the community.

Latest figures show that around 528 children remain in immigration detention facilities or alternative places of detention.

A detention facility is no place for a child, let alone a vulnerable child whose life experiences have been shaped by conflict, war or persecution.

The Australian Medical Association recently described the detention of children as a form of child abuse.

The Government justifies the detention of children on the basis that they are not in detention "centres", but "facilities" or "alternative places of detention".

But apart from leaving a place of detention to go to school or for very rare supervised family outings, children spend most of their time behind fences.

We have to keep the pressure on the Federal Government to move more children out of immigration detention facilities and into the community.

There are alternative models operating in developed countries and today, the International Detention Coalition (IDC) will outline the way forward at the UN Human Rights Council in Geneva.

The IDC, ChilOut and others will highlight the plight of innocent children who are being detained for asking this country to protect them from danger and persecution.

How you can help

- Add your voice to the IDC campaign to end immigration detention of children in Australia.
- Outline your concerns to your local MP and call for the Government to adopt new alternatives to detention, like the policy outlined by IDC.
- Write letters to the editor making it clear that no child should grow up behind bars when there are successful community models available.
- From today, you can sign the global petition – at www.endchilddetention.org – calling for an end to immigration detention of children. This will be presented to the Human Rights Council.

How to contact your local MP

http://aph.gov.au/Senators_and_Members/Guidelines_for_Contacting_Senators_and_Members

Essential reading

Campaign resources

<http://idcoalition.org/children/>

From today, the Captured Childhood policy document will provide research and a model for child-sensitive community assessment and placement. It will be available at www.idcoalition.org/ccap

Latest immigration detention statistics

http://www.immi.gov.au/managing-australias-borders/detention/_pdf/immigration-detention-statistics-20111130.pdf

For research and experiences of children in detention in Australia

<http://www.chilout.org/>

Media statement by the Prime Minister and Minister for Immigration, announcing the removal of most children out of immigration detention facilities

<http://bit.ly/w3yxeR>

Article 37(b) of the convention on the Rights of the Child states that: *“No child shall be deprived of his or her liberty unlawfully or arbitrarily. The arrest, detention or imprisonment of a child shall be in conformity with the law and shall be used only as a measure of last resort and for the shortest appropriate period of time.”*

<http://www.austlii.edu.au/au/other/dfat/treaties/1991/4.html>

Evidence given by Dr Peter Morris from the Northern Territory AMA to the Joint Select Committee on Australia’s Immigration Detention Network

<http://bit.ly/wr5lHV>

Feedback is encouraged

Please share any responses you receive through your advocacy work. Send any feedback to media@refugeecouncil.org.au