



Refugee Council
of Australia

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GOVERNMENT GETS IT WRONG WITH MORE DETENTION CENTRES

The Refugee Council of Australia (RCOA) has expressed dismay at the Australian Government's announcement that it will expand immigration detention facilities in Darwin.

The decision to build a new 1500-bed detention centre at Wickham Point and to expand the Darwin Airport Lodge by 400 beds will do nothing to address the underlying problems in Australia's approach to immigration detention, RCOA Chief Executive Officer Paul Power said.

"The Department of Immigration and Citizenship (DIAC) is spending hundreds of millions of dollars each year detaining less than 7000 people who have committed no crime and for whom there is no demonstrable reason for continued detention," Mr Power said.

"The answer is not to spend even more money building large new detention centres but to develop a detention policy that balances risk management with humane treatment.

"The continued expansion of detention centres is contrary to the Government's own detention policy for using such centres 'as a last resort and for the shortest practicable time'. It is also at odds with detention policies applied successfully across Europe and North America which see asylum seekers released into community arrangements after identity, health and screening processes.

"The Government must take heed of the advice of many mental health experts, including 2010 Australian of Year Professor Patrick McGorry, who have warned of the great psychological damage caused by the indefinite detention of vulnerable and traumatised people.

"Australia does not need more detention centres. We need the Government to show leadership and reconsider indefinite detention. For those presently in detention, we need a review of whether and why their continued detention is necessary."

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The Refugee Council of Australia represents
non-government organisations and
individuals working with and for refugees
in Australia and around the world