

Dear Sirs,

I would like to submit the following comments and observations:

Having worked with refugees both in the UK and in Melbourne I believe the system of mandatorily detaining people who have survived torture, trauma and the stresses of coming here is severely detrimental to their mental health and emotional well-being. Most refugees (estimated 7 out of 10) suffer from some form of depression or Post Traumatic Stress. The Palmer Inquiry has proved that there is virtually no mental health care available to detainees. Furthermore being in a closed, locked up environment surrounded by mostly unsympathetic guards with no certainty that the situation will change would further exacerbate any mental health problems.

Detaining children is indefensibly wrong. It is every child's human right to be free and to be with her mother and father. Hundreds of children have been detained by DIMIA often for long enough periods to disrupt normal development. Since DIMIA's poor excuse for detaining children was that the mothers didn't want to be separated from them (in itself a cruel choice for any mother to make!), there is then no reason for the detention of unaccompanied minors. 2 boys who came unaccompanied were both clearly under 18 at their time of arrival spent 3 1/2 years on Nauru, which can only be detrimental to their emotional and social development.

It is highly concerning that women have spent pregnancies in detention, are expected to labour and birth in detention (unless there's complications) and continue to be detained once they have a newborn baby and are breastfeeding. A pregnant woman and a woman breastfeeding a newborn baby will need plenty of nutritious food and extra calories, throughout the day and often night. Restricted and set mealtimes and the often poor quality of food will hence be detrimental to a woman's and her baby's health.

By allowing the mandatory detention of families, people with mental health issues and unaccompanied minors and by providing such poor standards of care DIMIA has failed our fellow human beings. DIMIA has purposely and continuously breached the human rights of asylum seekers.

Than You.

Daniela Franz,
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