

# Kids in Immigration Detention

## How many children are in immigration detention?

- It is government policy that children will not be held in immigration detention centres. Despite this, the most recent statistics released by the Department of Immigration & Citizenship in March 2013 indicate that 998 children are currently detained. 34 children are on Manus Island, 281 on Christmas Island and the remainder in mainland facilities. A further 985 children are in community detention.
- This is the highest number of children Australia has ever held in closed immigration facilities.
- Children who live in Alternative Places of Detention (APODs) (including Christmas Island, Darwin, Leonora and Inverbrackie), and children in Immigration Residential Housing facilities (including Sydney, Perth and Port Augusta) generally have their freedom of movement restricted to attending school (if they are enrolled) and occasional escorted excursions.

## Why is this an election issue?

- On 18 October 2010, Prime Minister Julia Gillard announced that the majority of asylum seeker children and their families would be released by 30 June 2011, prioritising unaccompanied minors and vulnerable children.
- Australia is the only developed country that has a policy of mandatory detention of all "unauthorised arrivals", including children. There are moral and humane alternatives. These children have not been detained "as a measure of last resort." There is no legitimate justification for this policy.

## Ask your candidates

- Will you work within your party for more just and humane policies, including an end to the detention of children in immigration detention facilities?
- In government, how long will your party leave children on Manus Island?
- Now that the Minister for Immigration is no longer the legal guardian for children sent to offshore detention sites, who will your party assign to protect the rights of these children?

## Fast Facts

- The UNHCR estimates that there are 25 million children who have been uprooted from their homes worldwide.
- A study of children who had been detained for more than one year revealed that:
  - 100% presented with Post-Traumatic Stress syndrome
  - 100% presented with major depression
  - 100% displayed suicidal ideation
  - 80% engaged in self-harm behaviours

- 70% displayed symptoms of an anxiety disorder
- 50% presented with persistent physical health problems

*Housing children and young people behind fences, without adequate freedom of movement or opportunities for education and play, while under constant guard, has caused tremendous unrest, misery and depression.*

Uniting Church in Australia Assembly, Media Statement, 18 October 2010



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