

24 March 2020

The Hon. Peter Dutton, Minister for Home Affairs

The Hon. Alan Tudge, acting Minister for Immigration, Citizenship, Migrant Services and Multicultural Affairs

The Hon. Jason Wood, Assistant Minister for Customs, Community Safety and Multicultural Affairs

Dear Ministers and Assistant Minister,

**Re: Australian healthcare professionals call for release of people seeking asylum and refugees from detention**

We, the undersigned (1,183) health care professionals, call on the Australian government to release all people seeking asylum and refugees from detention immediately.

Conditions in the detention centres, and even more so, in the hotels being used as Alternate Places of Detention, constitute a very high-risk environment for detainees' mental and physical health.

Hundreds of refugees and asylum seekers who were transferred from Manus and Nauru for medical treatment are still being held in closed detention, many without the medical treatment they need.

They now face the risk of COVID-19 infection. Transmission of COVID-19 in institutions is a significant risk. Detainees are held in relatively crowded conditions, made worse by communal meal and activity arrangements in the hotels and detention centres.

An employee guarding people seeking asylum and refugees detained in a Brisbane apartment block has tested positive to the novel coronavirus. Detention conditions in Australia would likely lead to rapid spread, posing a risk to guards and thence to the rest of the Australian community.

At the Mantra Hotel in Preston, an already high-risk environment is compounded by the fact that the hotel is used by airline crews, with personnel constantly coming and going from the hotel. This poses dual risks of infected detainees infecting the airline crew or detainees being infected by the airline crew.

Failure to take action to release people seeking asylum and refugees from detention will not only put them at greater risk of infection (and possibly death), it also risks placing a greater burden on wider Australian society and the health care system.

Not only should detainees be released, we call for the resources of IHMS to be put at the disposal of the government to help provide the health services needed in the wider community to bring COVID-19 under control.

We call for the release of people seeking asylum and refugees in detention immediately into the community, as the correct measure to take from both a humanitarian and public health perspective.

Yours sincerely



Professor David Isaacs MBBChir MD FRACP FRCPCH  
Clinical Professor in Paediatric Infectious Diseases, University of Sydney