Nursing organisations support the release of children from immigration detention

Australian College of Nursing (ACN) and Maternal Child and Family Health Nurses Australia (MCaFHNA) welcome the release of *The Forgotten Children* report, by the Australian Human Rights Commission, and its recommendations. The report states unequivocally that detaining children in immigration detention centres is detrimental to their health.

Findings show children in detention have been subjected to assault, self-harm and conditions damaging to their physical, social, emotional and cultural wellbeing.

The inquiry team, led by Professor Triggs, visited 11 detention centres across Australia and surveyed 638 children; the largest cohort of children ever surveyed about prolonged immigration detention.

“This robust and evidence-based report proves what many working in health have known to be true for decades – detention will lead to lifelong negative impacts on a child’s learning, socialisation and development”, says Adjunct Professor Debra Thoms, CEO of ACN.

“We must remember that the early years of a child’s life lay the foundations for his or her future growth, development and happiness. Psychosocial trauma and lack of health care in childhood often result in children experiencing learning difficulties, behavioural problems and physical and mental ill health. These issues may have a negative effect on their quality of life into adulthood”, says Julian Grant, President of MCaFHNA.

“The report represents an opportunity for long overdue change. While it is pleasing that the current Government has made progress in reducing the number of children in immigration detention centres, all evidence in the report clearly indicates that this number must be reduced to zero as a matter of urgency,” says Adjunct Professor Thoms.

ACN and MCaFHNA urge the Government to act on the report’s recommendation that all children and their families be detained for only as long as is necessary for health, identity and security checks.

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Interviews with Debra Thoms and Julian Grant are available upon request. Please contact Diana Abeleven at Zadro on 02 9212 7867 or diana@zadroagency.com.au for more information.