

9 November 2010

The Hon. Chris Bowen MP
Minister for Immigration and Citizenship
Parliament House
Canberra ACT

CC Scott Morrison
PO Box 6022
House of Representatives
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

Dear Mr Bowen

I am writing on behalf of the Association for the Wellbeing of Children in Healthcare which has acted as the advocacy voice for children, adolescents and their families in the health care system since its establishment 37 years ago.

AWCH is concerned about the current policy of detaining children in immigration detention as a matter of first resort and has a further concern about the impact of immigration detention on the psychosocial well-being of children and young people.

AWCH strongly opposes the mandatory detention of children and young people and recommends that families with children be released into community-based housing in family friendly units with access to health, education and recreation services to the same level as the general population. Transferring children and young people from high security places to lower security ones is not acceptable and depriving children of their liberty is a violation of their human rights.

AWCH refers you to the AWCH submission to the Human Rights Commission's *National Enquiry into Children in Immigration Detention* www.awch.org.au. The Australian Human Rights Commission report http://www.humanrights.gov.au/human_rights/children_detention/index.html on this inquiry was tabled in Parliament on 13 May 2004. The Inquiry found that children in Australian immigration detention centres had suffered numerous and repeated breaches of their human rights. In particular, the Inquiry found that Australia's immigration detention policy failed to protect the mental health of children, failed to provide adequate health care and education and failed to protect unaccompanied children and those with disabilities.

On behalf of AWCH, I ask that you consider seriously the detrimental effects and consequences of detaining children in immigration detention centres and release unaccompanied minors and families with children into community based accommodation.

Should you wish to discuss the contents of this letter please do not hesitate to contact Anne Cutler, AWCH Program Manager, or myself on 02 9817 2439.

Thank you for considering this matter.

Yours sincerely



Joanna Holt, AWCH President



association for the wellbeing
of children in healthcare

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