

MEDIA RELEASE

22 August 2012

For immediate release

Social Workers call for a Compassionate and Rational Asylum Seeker Policy

The Australian Association of Social Workers (AASW) represents the profession of social work in the Australian community and directly represents over 7000 members. The AASW strongly rejects the decision made by the Australian Government to re-open the Manus Island and Nauru detention centres. As a relatively affluent country, Australia should be expected to show leadership and compassion in its treatment of asylum seekers and refugees. Australia's policy on mandatory detention may breach its international obligations and it also serves to further traumatise many people who are already victims of persecution. The re-introduction of offshore detentions will only serve to re-traumatise and unnecessarily create severe social adjustment issues for people who are already alienated from their country and community of origin. The ultimate personal cost to the asylum seekers (most of whom will be found to be legitimate refugees) in terms of additional trauma is a product of our own Government policy. The ultimate cost to the Australian community in terms of additional services required will be immense. But importantly it is also irrational in terms of the cost to the Australian community in services needed and assistance required by traumatised people, trauma our own policy has created.

The AASW welcomes the increase to the number of refugees being accepted however calls on the Australian Government to think again and to reject the scare campaigns in relation to asylum seekers. The AASW calls on the Australian Government to respond to this serious policy challenge with compassion. The Australian Government should invest the additional resources being allocated into the incredibly expensive offshore strategy, directly into processing asylum seekers and to do everything possible to incorporate refugees into the Australian community as fully contributing socially included members of the multicultural Australian Society.

MEDIA CONTACT:

Professor Karen Healy
National President
Australian Association of Social Workers
Phone: 0413 220 803
