

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Children in immigration detention now incarcerated for over 6 months

Recent analysis by the Australian Association of Social Workers (AASW) reveals that almost 80 per cent of children in immigration detention have been there for over 6 months – an increase of more than 60 per cent since Operation Sovereign borders launched in September 2013.

Before Operation Sovereign borders, this figure was less than 20 per cent. However during the period of the operation, over 1,000 children have continued to be held in immigration detention. While the percentage of adults in immigration detention during this time has reduced by 14 per cent, the percentage of children decreased by just 4 per cent.

Professor Karen Healy, President of the AASW, says that detaining children for over 6 months has significant social, emotional and developmental impacts.

“Even when children are with their families, parents find it difficult to shelter their children from the stress and uncertainty of long term detention,” Professor Healy says.

“It is no use saying the parents can take their children home at any time and get out of the detention centres. These are families who have, in most cases, fled war, violence, threats of violence or serious oppression. Especially for women and children, there is simply nowhere to go.”

The AASW represents 7500 professional social work members, many of whom work directly with refugees and asylum seekers. As such they experience firsthand the incredible distress and harm mandatory immigration detention of children is causing.

For exclusive interview requests with Professor Karen Healy or one of our professional social work members, please contact our media officer on the number below.

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