

Media Release

Doctors to explore health issues in Refugee Week 2017

Tuesday, 20 June 2017

The Royal Australasian College of Physicians (RACP) will be highlighting the specific health issues faced by refugees and asylum-seeker children as part of Refugee Week 2017.

“Refugee Week is an opportunity for us to understand the health challenges refugees and asylum-seekers face when coming to Australia,” explained RACP President, Dr Catherine Yelland.

“As doctors we see first-hand why refugees and asylum-seeker children must receive appropriate access to health care, given the significant trauma many of these people have experienced before they arrived in Australia and while detained in immigration centres.

“Our paediatricians and physicians who treat these families are always inspired by their courage, resilience and determination to overcome challenges.”

The RACP will be running a social media campaign featuring personal accounts from five paediatricians working with refugees in Australia. These case studies highlight the resilience, strength and determination of refugees as well as the fantastic work of RACP members and other health professionals.

RACP President, Dr Catherine Yelland said the recent Manus Island class action supported the position of the RACP that holding refugees and asylum seekers in detention was extremely harmful to health.

“For years we’ve known that these facilities represent a significant breach of human rights and have an incredibly harmful effect on the physical and mental health of detainees,” Dr Yelland said.

“People held in detention face profound uncertainty, hopelessness and fear for their future while they wait for their claims to be processed.

“Our position is that mandatory detention must be stopped and refugees should have community-based placements while their claims are assessed.”

The RACP’s [Refugee and Asylum Seeker Health Position Statement](#) sets out a strong evidence-based opposition to immigration detention, particularly of children. It has been endorsed by 14 medical colleges and peak health organisations across Australasia.

Case studies are available that describe some of the issues doctors have experienced in treating asylum-seeker children. Read more at the [RACP website](#).

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About The Royal Australasian College of Physicians (RACP): The RACP trains, educates and advocates on behalf of more than 15,000 physicians and 7,500 trainee physicians across Australia and New Zealand.

The College represents a broad range of medical specialties including general medicine, paediatrics and child health, cardiology, respiratory medicine, neurology, oncology, public health medicine,

occupational and environmental medicine, palliative medicine, sexual health medicine, rehabilitation medicine, geriatric medicine and addiction medicine. Beyond the drive for medical excellence, the RACP is committed to developing health and social policies which bring vital improvements to the wellbeing of patients.

The College offers 60 training pathways. These lead to the award of one of seven qualifications that align with 45 specialist titles recognised by the Medical Board of Australia or allow for registration in nine vocational scopes with the Medical Council of New Zealand.