

Media Release

Leaked Nauru reports reinforce RACP health concerns

August 11 2016

Leaked reports from Nauru have reinforced health concerns resulting from immigration detention and again prompted calls from The Royal Australasian College of Physicians (RACP) to release asylum seekers into the community while claims are assessed.

Released yesterday and featured in *The Guardian*, more than 2,000 leaked incident reports reveal endemic assaults, sexual abuse, self-harm attempts and child abuse. Of most concern is that more than half of the reports involve children, including:

- 59 reports of assaults on children;
- Seven reports of sexual assault;
- 30 reports of self-harm involving children; and
- 159 of threatened self-harm involving children.

RACP Paediatrics & Child Health Division President Dr Sarah Dalton said the RACP has consistently called for all asylum seekers to be transferred to Australia.

“These leaked reports reinforce what we have already heard from paediatricians in our membership – that conditions in immigration detention are a significant health risk,” said Dr Dalton.

“The evidence is very clear. Cases involving children including sexual abuse, assault depression, anxiety and self-harm happen far too regularly.

“As paediatricians we understand that children are particularly vulnerable and the impact of these conditions can be lifelong.

“A change in approach is long overdue. We need to rethink immigration detention and release all asylum seekers into the community whilst their claims are being processed. Community-based placement is a viable and effective option.”

Dr Dalton said it was unfortunate that the reports had to be leaked for Australians to fully understand the health impact of immigration detention.

“Currently, health and medical professionals face up to two years in jail if they speak out on behalf of their patients.

“The ABF Act inhibits health professionals from fulfilling their legal and professional and ethical obligations to advocate for the best possible patient care,” she added.

The RACP released its [Policy and Position Statement on Refugee and Asylum Seeker Health](#) in May 2015.

Ends

Media contact: David Walsh ph: 0401 164 537 david.walsh@racp.edu.au

Follow the RACP on Twitter: <https://twitter.com/TheRACP>

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.