



Media Release

Time has come to end the torment and release asylum seekers

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The Royal Australasian College of Physicians (RACP) is calling on the Australian and New Zealand governments to end their current treatment of refugees and asylum seekers.

RACP President, Laureate Professor Nicholas Talley today launched the College's [Refugee and Asylum Seeker Health Position Statement](#), at the RACP Congress 2015.

The statement calls for a number of urgent measures, including; more rigorous health assessments for asylum seekers on arrival; better access to healthcare for asylum seekers and refugees in the community; increased support services for refugees; and an immediate end to mandatory detention and the release of all asylum seekers into the Australian community.

Many RACP physicians have seen the devastating consequences of mandatory detention first-hand.

“Our Fellows have been inside the detention facilities. We have treated refugees and asylum seekers during their detention and after their release into the community,” Professor Talley said.

“These people are not numbers, they are our patients.”

“As physicians, we are duty bound to speak on behalf of our patients – especially since their human rights are increasingly seen as optional.”

Professor Talley said the current treatment of refugees contravenes Article 25 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

“For over two decades, successive Australian Governments of all sides of politics have enforced a mandatory detention policy. The failing is bipartisan, and the health impacts on asylum seekers and refugees over that time are well documented,” Professor Talley said.

These costly policies are breaching human rights and causing significant harm, while denying appropriate health care. They are simply inhumane,” Professor Talley said.

“As the College representing physicians across Australia and New Zealand, we also oppose the New Zealand government’s recent decision to introduce mandatory detention.”

Professor Talley said the RACP’s position statement draws on the evidence that these policies cause substantial and lasting harm, to make the clear case for an end to the current treatment of refugees and asylum seekers, and a focus on providing the healthcare they need.

Asylum seekers and refugees often arrive with complex medical conditions and the RACP is also calling on the Australian Government to ensure that they have the best possible access to healthcare in the Australian community.

“As physicians we also need to ensure we are part of the solution – offering the best quality care to refugees and asylum seekers in our care,” Professor Talley said.

Ends

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About The Royal Australasian College of Physicians (RACP): The RACP trains, educates and advocates on behalf of more than 14,950 physicians – often referred to as medical specialists – and 6,530 Trainee members across Australia and New Zealand. The College represents more than 34 medical specialties including paediatrics & child health, cardiology, respiratory medicine, neurology, oncology and public health medicine, occupational & environmental medicine, palliative medicine, sexual health medicine, rehabilitation 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. www.racp.edu.au