

Media Release

Research says doctors need to be allowed to speak out about conditions in immigration

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The Royal Australasian College of Physicians (RACP) is again calling for a repeal of the Australian Border Force (ABF) Act, after recent research revealed a high level of public support for doctors' freedom to speak publically about conditions in immigration detention.

The survey revealed that 66 per cent of Australians believe it should be legal for doctors to speak publicly about conditions in immigration detention and report incidences of abuse to the police.

Currently, the ABF Act threatens jail sentences of up to two years for health and medical professionals who speak out on behalf of their patients.

RACP President Dr Catherine Yelland said the survey demonstrates public support for RACP's sustained calls that the silencing of doctors under the ABF Act must cease.

"The ABF Act inhibits health professionals from fulfilling their legal and professional and ethical obligations to advocate for the best possible patient care," explained Dr Yelland.

"The RACP represents the interests of 23,000 physicians and trainees and many from our membership have seen first-hand the impact of immigration detention.

"Some RACP members have already risked jail sentences by speaking out about the toll of immigration detention on the physical and mental health of people seeking asylum.

"In particular, the devastating impacts of immigration detention hit children the hardest, often causing severe and lasting health problems.

"The RACP will continue to advocate for urgent amendments to the ABF Act that threatens doctors speaking out on behalf of their patients and for an immediate end to immigration detention."

The Australia Institute research also revealed that 63 per cent of Australians support genuine refugees currently on Nauru and Manus Island being resettled in Australia.

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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.