



The Royal Australasian
College of Physicians

RACP supports doctors who risk jail time

Media Release

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Doctors who have risked two years jail time by speaking out against the government's border protection policy have the full support of the Royal Australasian College of Physicians (RACP).

Dr Josh Francis and Dr Karen Zwi both appeared on ABC's 7.30 program last night following yesterday's High Court ruling which will likely result in the return of 267 asylum seekers to offshore detention centres, many of whom were brought to Australia for medical reasons.

Both Dr Francis and Dr Zwi risk jail time under the Australian Border Force Act, introduced last year, which threatens doctors speaking out on behalf of their patients.

RACP President Laureate Professor Nick Talley commended the doctors on their impassioned stance, particularly their defence of the children who now face a likely move to Nauru.

"Of the 267 asylum seekers, 37 are infants and 54 are children," explained Professor Talley. "Detention centres are no place for children. The health and developmental impacts are profound – with severe and long-term health consequences.

"The RACP strongly supports Dr Francis and Dr Zwi and all medical professionals who have spoken out for an immediate end to immigration detention, and the release of all children. As seen on 7.30 last night, they have witnessed first-hand the impact of immigration detention on children – including sexual abuse, depression, anxiety and self-harm.

"We will continue to advocate for urgent amendments to the Australian Border Force Act that threatens doctors speaking out on behalf of their patients. Doctors should not face being jailed because of their commitments to their patients," he added.

A transcript of the 7.30 story, featuring Dr Francis and Dr Zwi, is available at <http://www.abc.net.au/7.30/content/2015/s4399907.htm>

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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.