

The Hon Malcolm Turnbull
Prime Minister of Australia
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

Friday, 12 February 2016

Dear Mr Turnbull

Re: Offshore Detention

The Pacific Solution is working. The number of unscheduled boat arrivals has slowed. This has come about by a policy which incarcerates refugees who arrive by boat, including children, in harsh conditions on Manus Island or Nauru.

The basis of the Pacific Solution seems to be that future asylum seekers will be deterred from coming by boat because they know that harsh mistreatment awaits them.

If Manus Island and Nauru were pleasant places where families thrive in good health in an untroubled and nurturing environment the deterrent effect would of course not exist.

We understand that, despite vociferous denials, Manus and Nauru have repeatedly been shown to be unsafe places and this is in fact part of the strategy.

Effectively then one group of people is being mistreated for the benefit of another group which might otherwise undertake a perilous journey by boat from an Asian port.

The problem with this strategy is that it is unethical to subject people who have not provided consent to harsh treatment for the benefit of others. The extent of the benefit to the other group is irrelevant. The people being sent to these islands have not consented to be used for the government's deterrent purpose.

In medical research these principles are laid down in the Declaration of Helsinki. An example of such ethical principles operating in healthcare is in organ

donation. A person with two good kidneys cannot be conscripted without consent to donate one kidney for transplantation even when that transplant would likely be lifesaving. The principle is the same. In the current government offshore detention strategy people, particularly children, are placed at serious risk of mental and physical health problems to protect others.

We are confident that our government would not condone participation in research or treatment without the consent of persons who themselves can derive no benefit, even if those persons were unlikely to be harmed in the process. When innocent people are clearly being harmed without consent for the benefit of others the ethical implications are clear.

Ethical principles are not established by legislation but are identified as self-evident truths. We fail to understand how government decisions can bypass or negate well established and universally recognised ethical principles.

The argument that refugee security assessment procedures keep people on these islands is spurious. These processes can readily be undertaken in Australia.

For our government to be seen to follow well established ethical principles, the forced detention of asylum seekers in environments with a risk of harm must cease.

Signed by:

Emeritus Professor Kim Oates AM,
University of Sydney

Professor David Isaacs, University of
Sydney

Dr Sue Packer AM, Community
Paediatrician, ACT

Professor John Ziegler AM, School of
Women's & Children's Health, University
of NSW

Dr Avril Alba, University of Sydney

Scientia Professor David A. Cooper AO,
Director, Kirby Institute, University of NSW

Professor David Burgner, Paediatrician,
Melbourne

Dr Hilton Immerman OAM, University of
NSW

Emeritus Professor Simon Chapman AO,
University of Sydney

Dr Alex Wodak AM, President, Australian
Drug Law Reform Foundation and
Director, Australia21

Deborah Linker

Emeritus Professor Konrad Kwiet, Sydney
Jewish Museum

Prof Louise Baur AM, University of
Sydney

Joanna Kalowski, Mediator and facilitator

Dr Stephen Adelstein, Clinical
Immunologist, Sydney

Dr Sue Woolfenden,
Community/Developmental Paediatrician,
University of NSW

Dr Sarah Dalton, Paediatric Emergency
Physician, Sydney

Professor Kevin Forsyth, Academic
paediatrician

Associate Professor Alyson Kakakios
OAM, University of Sydney

Professor Andrew Carr, Head of Clinical
Research, AMR, St Vincent's Hospital,
and UNSW

Heather Mitchell, Actress

Professor Andrew Rosenberg, Head of
Paediatrics, School of Medicine,
University of Notre Dame, Sydney

Dr Joseph Toltz, Musicology Unit, Sydney
Conservatorium of Music, University of
Sydney

Professor Ian Kerridge, Sydney Medical
School, University of Sydney

Professor Stuart Tangye, Head,
Immunology Division, Garvan Institute of
Medical Research, UNSW

Professor Wayne Hall, Director, Centre for
Youth Substance Abuse Research,
University of Queensland

Professor Merrilyn Walton AM, School of
Public Health, Sydney Medical School,
University of Sydney

Dr Christopher Blyth, Paediatrician,
Infectious Diseases Physician and Clinical
Microbiologist

Dr Tri Giang Phan, Immunology Division,
Garvan Institute of Medical Research,
UNSW

Professor Jonathan Sprent FAA FRS

Rodrigo Vazquez-Lombardi, Immunology Division, Garvan Institute of Medical Research, UNSW

Dr Elissa Deenick, Garvan Institute of Medical Research, University of NSW

Dr. Christopher Sundling, Garvan Institute of Medical Research

Irving Wallach, Barrister, Forbes Chambers, Sydney

Dr David Langley

Professor Mark Ferson, University of New South Wales

Dr Cindy Ma, Garvan Institute of Medical Research and UNSW

Claudia Loetsch, PhD candidate, Garvan Institute of Medical Research, Sydney

Dr Vinny Mamo

Dr Genevieve Brady

Professor Tuan V. Nguyen, University of New South Wales and University of Technology Sydney

Professor Philip Boyce, University of Sydney

Martin Mcgrath, Director of Photography, ACS

Dr Dimitra Tzioumi, Paediatrician

Professor Emerita Suzanne D. Rutland OAM, Dept. of Hebrew, Biblical & Jewish Studies, U. of Sydney

John Kaldor, Scientia Professor, Kirby Institute, UNSW

A/Professor Anne Mijch OAM, Monash University

Dr Miranda Johnson, Department of History, University of Sydney

Debbie Burnett, Immunology Division, Garvan Institute of Medical Research, UNSW

Professor Jenny Gunton, Garvan Institute of Medical Research and University of Sydney

Jeffrey B. Kamins, Senior Rabbi, Arno & Hella Seefeldt Rabbinic Chair, Emanuel Synagogue

Rabbi Jacqueline Ninio, Emanuel Synagogue

Dr Paul Gray, Paediatric Immunologist, Sydney

Son Nghiem, Senior Research Fellow, Institute of Health & Biomedical Innovation, QUT

Professor Lynne Madden, Associate Dean, Teaching and Learning, School of Medicine, UND, Sydney

Professor Fiona Stanley AC, UWA and University of Melbourne, Patron of Telethon Kids Institute

Laureate Professor Nick Talley, RACP President