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Media release

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Human Rights Commission Report Reveals Policy of Child Abuse

The Australian Human Rights Commission (AHRC) today released its report, *The Forgotten Children*, providing a comprehensive overview of the degrading conditions in which children seeking asylum are forced to live as a result of current Australian law and policy.

The report is the culmination of five public hearings, 239 submissions and over one thousand interviews with children and parents in immigration detention. Informed by the expertise of medical and developmental professionals, the report concludes that detention facilities pose an unacceptable risk of harm to children.

Claire Hammerton, spokesperson for Australian Lawyers for Human Rights, said “the findings by the Human Rights Commission detail the detrimental conditions faced by children in different detention facilities in Australia and offshore which includes a shortage of water, inadequate shelter, inadequate provision of clothing and footwear and limited healthcare.”

“The Australian Government is clearly in breach of its international human rights obligations by keeping children in detention facilities,” said Ms Hammerton. “There is no reasonable justification for the policy of keeping children in immigration detention. The evidence presented in the AHRC report demonstrates the government’s engagement in a policy of systematic child abuse.”

The report also highlights that the former Immigration Minister, Scott Morrison, acknowledged that the prolonged, mandatory detention of children does not act as a deterrent to asylum seekers travelling to Australia by sea.

The AHRC’s report comes as hundreds of children continue to languish in detention facilities, months after the former Immigration Minister and Federal Attorney-General promised to release all children from immigration detention. “The Government must stop stalling and fulfil its promise to release all children from immigration detention,” Ms Hammerton said. “This includes the children on Nauru, of which there are more than one hundred, who are detained in extremely harsh conditions with little hope of a better future.”

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ALHR was established in 1993 and is a national network of over 2600 Australian solicitors, barristers, academics, judicial officers and law students who practise and promote international human rights law in Australia. ALHR has active and engaged National, State and Territory committees and a secretariat at La Trobe University Law School in Melbourne.