

The Hon Peter Dutton MP
Minister for Home Affairs
PO Box 6022
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

8th February 2021

An open letter from medical, nursing and allied health professionals to the Department of Home Affairs regarding the release of 15 refugees who have been detained in a complex adjacent to the Mercure Darwin Airport Resort.

Dear Mr. Dutton and the Department of Home Affairs,

We are medical, nursing and allied health professionals who wish to express our deep concern at the ongoing detention of the 15 refugees who are currently being detained at the Mercure Darwin Airport Resort. These refugees were medically transferred to Australia from Nauru almost 12 months ago, after being detained in Nauru for years, and have been held in indefinite detention since this time. Most of these individuals had been recognised as refugees prior to their transfer to Darwin, and some were awaiting resettlement in a third country.

Many of this group, despite their transfer to Australia for medical treatment, continue to await necessary medical care. This includes surgical intervention for conditions limiting mobility, specialist medical reviews and attention to their deteriorating mental health, with worsening psychosocial symptoms of depression, anxiety and ongoing trauma. They are confined to the facility and are only permitted to leave for medical appointments. However, the limited care they have been given has not addressed their ongoing conditions, for which they were originally relocated to Darwin to manage. Additionally, there are multiple reports of inadequate living conditions and sanitation that contribute to deteriorating health.

As healthcare providers, including doctors, nurses, allied health professionals and students of said disciplines, we strongly advocate that provision of healthcare is not determined by background, political policy or affiliation and immigration or citizenship status. The health (inclusive of the psychosocial wellbeing) of these 15 individuals is not an exchangeable commodity but is amongst the inalienable human rights of all people. Indefinite detention in conditions below that of the minimum expected standard of living, without access to appropriate healthcare, is destructive to the psychological and physical health of human beings. As a signatory to the 1951 Refugee Convention, the Australian Government has a responsibility to provide humane and dignified care to refugees and those seeking asylum.

The release of refugees brought to Australia under previous Medevac legislation has already occurred interstate, in some cases, with bridging visas provided to enable

living and working in the community. We call on the Department of Home Affairs and the Federal Government to immediately release these 15 refugees into the community, end their indefinite detention and for expedited and long-awaited adequate medical care to be provided to them.

Yours sincerely,

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