

MEDIA RELEASE

GOVERNMENT MUST INVESTIGATE THE STANDARD OF MENTAL HEALTH CARE IN DETENTION CENTRES

Leading health and mental health organisations and mental health advocates are today calling on the Minister for immigration, Chris Bowen, and the Minister for Mental Health and Ageing, Mark Butler, to urgently review the standards of mental health care in all immigration detention centres used by the Commonwealth Government.

The call follows last week's report from the Australian Human Rights Commission, which raises serious questions about the mental health impacts of indefinite detention on people being held at the Curtin Immigration Detention Centre.

There are genuine concerns that the Government is not providing adequate mental health care to people in detention centres at a time when incidents of self-harm and suicide have increased, and riots, protests, and hunger strikes have become common.

This issue is urgent and action needs to be taken now. People's mental health can't wait until the political debate over the appropriateness of immigration detention has been resolved.

Detainees have the right to mental health care commensurate with their need. The Government's own National Practice Standards for the Mental Health Workforce should apply to detention centre staff. Mental health professionals need to be able to work within the same standards that protect everyone in Australia to ensure that the care they provide to detainees is effective and safe.

Every person has the right to be treated with dignity and respect, to have decent living conditions, and freedom to communicate with their family, lawyers and friends. The Government must act now to make the changes to the living conditions and freedoms that will improve the mental health and wellbeing of people in detention.

It is clear that conditions inside detention centres are unacceptable. Children are especially vulnerable. The mental health crisis in the immigration detention system is rapidly worsening and these conditions cannot be allowed to continue.

The Government must immediately launch an independent investigation into the standards of mental health care in Australia's immigration detention centres.

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