

During World Refugee Week 2020, the AASW continues calls for the Federal Government to put an end to its punitive practice of mandatory detention.

AASW National President Christine Craik said, "This year's theme for World Refugee Week is Celebrating the Year of Welcome. The Australian government, however, consistently breaches the human rights of asylum seekers and refugees, our welcome is one to offshore detention, immigration detention centres and other forms of incarceration for those who have broken no laws. "The COVID-19 pandemic has shown that policy changes can be made quickly and to the benefit of vulnerable people. This has not occurred within the people seeking asylum and refugee population, who have been left exposed to the effects of coronavirus in detention. "As World Refugee Week started, there have been attempts by the government to move a group of people seeking asylum with pre-existing medical conditions from hotel accommodation in Queensland back to offshore detention. These people seeking asylum were transferred to Australia under the now repealed medevac legislation. They are at significant risk of severe complications or death if they are moved back to immigration detention while COVID-19 is still a threat." The pandemic has a more severe impact on vulnerable groups and people in detention are no exception. Ms Craik continued, "There is nothing stopping the government from releasing this group, and all people seeking asylum, into the community where they can be free to continue their lives in safety and security. Keeping these people in detention is cruel and tortuous, and its only purpose is to send a terrible message to others who wish to seek asylum in Australia that 'You are not welcome here'."

"Australia needs to be better than this and we can do better than this. "The practice of mandatory detention needs to end now. It causes immeasurable damage to those vulnerable people who have already worked so hard to flee harm. If we want to properly celebrate World Refugee Week, and the resilience and tenacity of people seeking asylum and refugees; this is the only way."

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