

THE AUSTRALIAN FEDERATION OF GRADUATE WOMEN-NSW Inc



AFGW-NSW Inc

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Office Hours: Tuesdays/Thursdays 10.00am – 2.00pm

The Hon. Scott Morrison
Minister for Immigration and Border Protection

1st August 2014

Dear Minister,

I write on behalf of the Australian Federation of Graduate Women NSW (AFGW-NSW Inc.) which is affiliated with the Australian Federation of Graduate Women Inc. (AFGW Inc.) and the International Federation of University Women Inc. (IFUW Inc.)

Our organization is concerned with advocacy for women's rights through access to quality education and with the promotion of international cooperation, friendship, peace and respect for human rights.

We urge you to take some compassionate action with respect to the children in detention on Christmas Island. I refer to the report from the Australian Human Rights Commission in relation to the inquiry team which visited the detention centre on Christmas Island earlier this year. The team, headed by Commission President, Professor Gillian Triggs, found that the children were so distressed that their development was impaired to the extent that some were biting themselves and others were banging their heads. (Australian Human Rights Commission Website – *Inquiry Team Visits Distressed Children on Christmas Island.*) These conclusions have been confirmed by a second visit later this year.

'Most of the children were visibly distressed. They told the team "this place is hell", "there's no school, nowhere to play and nothing to do." The children also spoke about their distress at living in a closed environment with adults who were sad, angry and self-harming.' (Australian Human Rights Commission Website.)

I refer you to the letter sent to you recently by Dr Madeleine Laming, President of the Australian Federation of Graduate Women Inc. and Dr Caroline Jones National Convenor for Peace, Human Rights and Human Security. Attached to that letter was a copy of the submission from the Australian Federation of University Women* to the National Inquiry into Children in Immigration Detention, Dated 14th March 2002 and written by Dr Jennifer Strauss.

I quote from the recommendations within that submission, specifically recommendation 7, which recommends :-

'That Australia honour its obligations under Article 28 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child to provide child asylum seekers with an education which is both comparable in quality with that provided to Australian children and cognisant of the special needs of refugee children for support services such as special language skilling and counselling for emotional or behavioural problems resulting from traumatic experiences in their past history;'

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We believe that such an educational programme would not only be an act of humanity but that it would make the resettlement of the families of these children more effective and would go some way to making this facility a less distressing place for all.

We also suggest that some thought be given to an appropriate programme for the youths of Manus Island for similar reasons. The goodwill which a well-devised and implemented programme could bring would be of great benefit to all.

I write this letter following discussion with many of the members of AFGW-NSW Inc. and on whose behalf I reiterate our great concern for these children. We urge you to take action to provide the educational opportunities these children should have and which would go some way to relieve the unimaginable distress they are enduring at present.

Yours sincerely

Virginia Ross
President AFGW NSW

- The Australian Federation of Graduate Women was formerly called the Australian Federation of University Women.