From ‘#LetThemStay’ to ‘KidsOffNauru’, Reflections for child-centred campaigning

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Re-establishment of Offshore Processing

- Australian government re-established offshore processing in August 2012

- People arriving in Australia to seeking asylum on or after 19 July 2013 face permanent ban on resettlement in Australia

- At its height 2450 were held in Australia’s offshore processing centre on Nauru and Manus Island, PNG

- This included 222 children who were held in Nauru
Australia's detention regime sets out to make asylum seekers suffer, says chief immigration psychiatrist

“We have here an environment that is inherently toxic,” Dr Peter Young told Guardian Australia. “It has characteristics which over time reliably cause harm to people’s mental health. We have very clear evidence that that’s the case.”

Self-harming is 'seen as bad behaviour' - video

Manus Island asylum seekers in mental health crisis

About half the asylum seekers in detention on Manus Island and Nauru are suffering from significant depression, stress or anxiety, according to clinical assessments.

Their situation is worse than for those in detention on the mainland and on Christmas Island, where a third are suffering major mental health problems, the assessments reveal.
Lack of appropriate treatment

- Detention fatigue
- Lack of appropriate facilities
- Lethal hopelessness
- Chronic conditions left untreated
- Compounded trauma
Medical Transfer to Australia

NUMBER OF MEDICAL TRANSFERS

- 2012-2013: 50
- 2013-2014: 100
- 2014-2015: 250
- 2015-2016: 50
- 2016-2017: 50
“M68”

The race to prevent offshore transfers
Australia secretly flies pregnant refugee out of country before hearing

Government uses chartered flight to get Somali woman, who asked for an abortion after being raped, out of Australia as an injunction application is made

Comment: Flying a refugee to Nauru in secret: is this extraordinary rendition?

Royal Children's Hospital doctors refuse to return children to detention

Victoria's Health Minister Jill Hennessy has thrown her support behind doctors at the Royal Children's Hospital who have refused to discharge asylum seeker children back into detention. Doctors at the hospital are concerned about the welfare of their dozens of patients and say it would be unethical to discharge them to unsafe conditions that could compromise their health.
#LetThemStay

A nation wide campaign to prevent removal of people back to offshore processing centres
Reduction in medical transfers to Australia

- Indefinite offshore detention was leading to a growing medical crisis
- At the same time medical transfer to Australia reduced

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Transfers in 2014/15 year</th>
<th>Transfers in 2015/16 year (to 26 April 2016)</th>
<th>Percent decrease</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Manus to Australia</td>
<td>130</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>94.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nauru to Australia</td>
<td>410</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>91.4%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>540</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>92.2%</td>
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Suicide and self-harm contagion in children

- Suicide attempts and self harm
- Traumatic withdrawal syndrome
- Impact of prolonged lethal hopelessness
- Manifestation of extreme distress
#KidsOffNauru

- Considerations
  - Campaigning vs legal avenue to get kids off
  - The feared impact of publicity on the contagion

- Informed consent – what is it?
  - Legal risk
  - Safety risk (home and in situ)
  - Understanding the potential impact (or lack thereof)
  - The child’s best interest
  - Managing the power dynamic and ensuring the power to say ‘stop’
  - The therapeutic value of campaign involvement
  - Risk of individual harm for population-wide impact
Risks

• Refugees, and children sharing their story in the context of campaign in a heated policy area do so at significant personal risk, including:
  • Discrimination
  • Reprisals from the government
  • Backlash
  • Negative consequences for family
Psycho-social risks

• Raised expectations leading to increased hopelessness

• Triggering of trauma symptoms (eg. flashbacks, nightmares)

• Difficulties in family dynamic (particularly parent/child relationship)

• Impact on the child (school, as a teenager, adulthood)
Peter Dutton says refugees self-harming to get to Australia, warns against Nauru abuse reports 'hype'

By political reporter Stephanie Anderson
Updated 11 Aug 2016, 3:03pm

Peter Dutton has responded to the leaking of thousands of files alleging abuse of children and adults in Nauru's offshore immigration detention centre by saying some refugees are self-harming and filing false claims in an effort to get to Australia.

Mother of asylum baby Asha accused of 'burning' the one-year-old so she could come to Australia

- Asylum seeker baby Asha's mother accused of intentionally burning her
- Staff at Brisbane's Lady Cilento Hospital rejected the accusation
- A Nauru guard claimed the mother admitted to purposefully burning her
- Old police received child-protection notification but finalised investigation
Asylum seeker scammers exploiting Aussie medical welfare to live rent-free in Sydney

EXCLUSIVE: UP TO 70 asylum seekers have been caught out using a medical scam to live rent-free in Sydney, with one sprung even using taxpayer dollars to pay prostitutes.

Sharri Markson, National Political Editor, The Daily Telegraph

CASE STUDIES:

1. An Iranian male transferred from an RPC for medical treatment. Moved into community detention after treatment completed. That community detention was revoked after he displayed criminal sexual behaviour towards a female case worker. When questioned about that behaviour he said he was in financial stress because he spent all of his money on prostitutes.

2. An Iraqi male transferred from an RPC for medical treatment for a stomach complaint. That treatment has been completed and he has been independently assessed as medically fit to return to the RPC, but has taken legal action preventing his return. His wife and children are all live in Iraq.

3. A Sri Lankan national was transferred from an RPC for treatment of arthritis and rashes. Has been found not to be a refugee through several processes, but refuses to leave.

4. A Bangladeshi national transferred for treatment of lower back pain. Doctors found no surgery was needed and recommended physiotherapy. He has taken legal action preventing his return.

5. An Iranian national suffered a back injury after falling off gym equipment. Treated in Australia, his injury no longer requires specialist treatment. Years later he remains in Australia and has taken legal action preventing his return to an RPC.
Additional factors

• When everything about the lives of people held offshore is controlled by the government telling their story can be powerful

• Responsibility to allow children and people held offshore and other vulnerable groups to tell their story the way they want, and allow them to make the decision not to tell their story if they wish

• Informed consent – an ongoing balancing act
Thank You