23rd October, 2018

The Honourable Scott Morrison MP

Prime Minister

Parliament House

CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Prime Minister,

I write on behalf of the Executive and members of the Australian Psychoanalytical Society ([www.psychoanalysis.asn.au](http://www.psychoanalysis.asn.au)). We offer intensive psychological treatment to adults and children suffering from the long-term psychological and psychiatric consequences, of severe deprivation and trauma. We wish to voice our grave concerns about the medical and psychological crisis affecting adult and child refugees and asylum seekers on Nauru.

Every major specialty medical college in Australia is calling for the removal of children and their families from Nauru.

There is a large body of irrefutable evidence that indefinite detention and isolation harms children. Children detained on Nauru are exhibiting the life threatening symptoms, self-harm, suicide attempts, and refusal of food to be expected in this deprived and abusive environment.

Medical transfers requested by medical colleagues in Nauru or Australian lawyers have only proceeded with the intervention of the Federal Court. This has resulted in unacceptable delays to care, thereby exacerbating an already dire position for these people.

It is of particular concern to us, that Nauru has begun to block medical transfers approved by the Australian Government. Last week, the Nauruan government asked Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF), the last provider of independent psychiatric care, to leave the island, and the Health Minister Greg Hunt has ruled out any replacement of this service. MSF have made very clear just how serious the health situation is. It is a national shame that this has been allowed to continue.

As a provider of mental health services to the Australian community, the health and well-being of asylum seekers and their children is important to our members. Because it is impossible to effectively treat patients within a depriving environment it is essential that children and their families must be immediately removed from Nauru to prevent further irreversible damage and to allow immediate remedial care.

We respectfully request that a member of our Society meet with your representative urgently to discuss a way forward. We call upon you as Prime Minister, the Minister for Immigration and all members of Parliament to listen to the combined message of the many experts who demand an urgent end to detention of children and families on Nauru.

The Australian Psychoanalytical Society requests in the strongest possible terms, that the physical and mental health needs of these children and families be addressed immediately by providing adequate psychological and physical assessment and treatment. Secondly, we request that the Government addresses the ongoing harm by removing these children and families immediately from the harm-inducing environment of indefinite detention on Nauru.

Yours faithfully



Julie Meadows BA (Hons) M.Psych Member APS, Member APAS, Member International Psychoanalytic Association

President

cc The Hon David Coleman, MP, Minister for Immigration, Citizenship and Multicultural Affairs

 The Hon Peter Dutton MP, Minister of Home Affairs

 The Hon Bill Shorten MP, Opposition Leader

 The Hon Shayne Neumann MP, Shadow Minister for Immigration and Border Protection