

Violence in Offshore Detention: Out of Sight is NOT Out of Mind

Open Letter to the Prime Minister

Dear Prime Minister,

Violence in Australia's Pacific offshore detention sites in Nauru and Papua New Guinea is a domestic issue.

As organisations and individuals working against violence against women, children and men inside Australia, we stand with the children, women and men held in Australian-funded detention centres overseas, in conditions that expose them to systematic violence.

- A 23 year-old woman brutally raped and left untreated until the point of organ failure who remains in a critical condition without access to her family or independent support.
- A 33 year-old year-old woman sexually assaulted by a male nurse contracted to fulfil the responsibilities of the Australian government, who described 'guards masturbating and laughing as they accompanied her and the other women from a medical appointment'
- Gay men who express fears of being at risk of death in a sequence of harrowing letters
- Recognised refugees 'settled' in the community subjected to sexual and xenophobic violence
- Depressed and traumatised inmates exposed to marijuana dependence, traded for sex

These are not isolated cases. Expert after expert testified to a recent Senate Select Committee that the conditions of offshore detention are conducive to family and sexual violence. Professor David Isaacs testified that 'The living conditions on Nauru put children at high risk of suffering physical or sexual abuse'. Ms Caz Coleman, a former Senior Policy Advisor, stated: 'the issue of domestic and family violence, sexual exploitation, harassment and assault and child protection matters were obvious from the outset of the centre establishment in Nauru'.

The systemic and structural nature of the conditions that generate this violence against women, children, gay men and families are the outcome of Australia's policy of 'deterrence'. The flawed logic of this policy creates fear and terror among would-be asylum seekers by punishing those already within our reach. Researchers Against Pacific Black Sites (RAPBS) argue that this calculated violence now has to be recognized as 'tantamount to a program of torture'. But precisely because this violence is perpetrated in

our offshore equivalent of 'black sites', it can be carried out hidden from the eyes of the Australian public.

Feminists, women's groups and others working against violence against women, children and LGBTIQ peoples all too often work in isolation from refugees and their supporters. We want this separation to end.

Australian of the Year, Rosie Batty, says:

'Those of us who care about violence against women, children and other vulnerable people at home need to care about what happens to these same people elsewhere who are under our care. The Australian government funds the offshore detention centres on Nauru and Manus Island. The centres are, by their very design, unsafe and dangerous places.

These centres cannot be patched up. They must be shut down. The people forcibly held there are those who sought protection in this country. They deserve care, not punishment. Out of sight is not out of mind!'

In solidarity with Rosie Batty and RAPBS, we, collectively, call for the end to systemic sexual, physical and psychological torture in our Pacific Black Sites.

We call for the closure of our Pacific Black Sites.

Australian Council of Social Services

Federation of Community Legal Centres, Victoria

Community Legal Centres NSW

Luke Batty Foundation

WESNET

Australian Women Against Violence Alliance

Annie North Inc

Victorian Centres Against Sexual Assault

National Council of Single mothers & their Children

Domestic Violence Victoria

Aboriginal Family Violence Prevention and Legal Service Victoria

South Eastern Centre Against Sexual Assault and Family Violence

Zonta Perth

No To Violence Male Family Violence Prevention Association

Southern Domestic Violence Services

Immigrant Women Speakout

Flat Out Inc.

Women in Prison Advocacy Network
National Association of Community Legal Centres
Women with Disabilities Victoria
WEAVE
Reclaim The Night, Castlemaine
Grandmothers Against Detention of Refugee Children
Women's Legal Services NSW
Domestic Violence Legal Workers Network
Gay and Lesbian Health Victoria
Australian Muslim Women's Association
Lomai Attorneys
Queensland Teachers Union
Women in Literary Arts Australia
Anglican Church Australia, Diocese of Bendigo
Researchers Against Pacific Black Sites
Centre for Human Rights Education, Curtin University
Women's Council for Domestic and Family Violence Services (WA)
RRAN WA, Students for Refugees
DASSAN
Healing Well Inc
Pat Thomas House Inc Domestic Violence Services

1,272 individual signatures

All information for this letter has been taken from documents in the public domain.

<https://www.thesaturdaypaper.com.au/news/immigration/2015/08/22/nauru-rapes-there-war-women/14401656002263>

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the luke batty foundation



No To Violence
Male Family Violence
Prevention Association



**WOMEN IN
Literary Arts
AUSTRALIA**



South Eastern CASA
Centre Against Sexual Assault & Family Violence



Annie North Inc.

