
Children Asylum and Detention is this the Australian Way?

DCI-Australia Member, barrister and solicitor Julie Redman reports on a recent South Australian initiative to develop better responses.

Did you know that hundreds of children are detained in Australian detention centres awaiting processing as refugees or deportation? Typically these children come with families from Iraq or Afghanistan. A growing number are unaccompanied.

On Saturday the 30th of June at the Law Society of South Australia, the Children & The Law Committee of the Law Society of South Australia, Action for Children SA and The Australian Refugee Association ran a combined seminar focusing on the conditions for children asylum seekers, both within our detention centres and after release as temporary protection visa holders. The Workshop was made possible as a result of generous funding from the Law Foundation of South Australia which has provided \$8,000 for the workshop and the production of a booklet for dissemination to a broader audience on the issues facing children asylum seekers. This is currently in preparation.

Speakers at the workshop included the Minister for Immigration, Mr Phillip Ruddock, Dr Mary Crock – Senior lecturer in law University of Sydney, Christine Charles – CEO of Department of Human Services South Australia, Tim Haines – Director of STTARS (Survivors of Torture), Alvin Gonzage – a Representative of the UNHCR in Australia and Kevin Liston – Australian Refugees Association who all poignantly highlighted the issues facing the Australian Government both at Federal and State level, for NGO's and for the asylum seekers themselves, in this complex but growing reality within Australia.

Dr. Crock opened the seminar with a powerful and passionate presentation focusing on the disjunction between the rights of the child embodied within international law and the experiences of child refugees and asylum seekers in Australia. The hundreds of children in detention centres in Australia today are the victims of the Australian governments unwavering commitment to combat “people smuggling” and illegal forms of immigration.

The 60 participants at the workshop representing some 37 organisations wrestled with the complexity of the issues involved but resolved to work together to look in more detail at the issues and to provide a coordinated approach to support of children asylum seekers.

An ongoing group of participants has begun working together on a coordinated plan of action.

The Minutes of the workshop will be available for distribution in the near future and anyone interested in the plight of children asylum seekers should contact Graham Jobling, Committee Resource person of the Children & The Law Committee or Julie Redman at Alderman Redman on 8212 5186.

The LGBT Peer Support Project was funded by the Brisbane City Council through the Youth Suicide Prevention Strategy. The project worked with lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender young people to develop sustainable models of peer support and education. A new booklet *SISTA OF VENUS* has been produced for young women who identify as lesbian, bisexual or queer, or who are exploring their sexuality.

Contact Othilas Young Womens Housing and Support Service Tel: + 61 (0) 7 3847 9633 for more copies.

The booklets are free, however assistance with postage is requested.