

19<sup>th</sup> July 2017

## Media Statement – Four Years Too Long

Refugee Advice & Casework Service (RACS) calls for the immediate evacuation of the detention centres on Nauru and Manus Island.

Today marks four years since the Federal Government announced the commencement of the current offshore processing regime of people seeking asylum.

In the past four years, we have witnessed consistent human rights abuses in offshore detention. Six people have lost their lives as a result of the treatment they have endured on Nauru and Manus Island.

RACS' Principal Solicitor, Sarah Dale, represents 24 teenage boys who are left in the perils of Nauru. These boys were only children when they were dragged from their beds in the middle of the night and taken to Nauru, where they have now spent what should have been some of the best years of their lives languishing in tents and in limbo, fearing for their safety. *"These boys"*, Sarah says, *"would literally give anything to get off Nauru"*.

At RACS, we have seen families torn apart by this cruel and inhumane policy and the effects that this policy has had on the many whom were transferred back to Australia for medical treatment. RACS had a program to advocate that such people be released from detention and live in the Australian community whilst receiving such treatment.

RACS has had access to a number of health records and case files that document the horror of what the people on Nauru and Manus have had to endure. Ms Dale states *"our team at RACS are left with chills simply reviewing the documentation we have, we are scarred by what we have seen and live in fear of what else we don't know given the extensive secrecy implemented on such matters."*

The *Four Years Too Many* report, released today by GetUp and the Human Rights Law Centre, cites statistics from the Department of Immigration and Border Protection which indicate that there has been a critical or major incident on Manus Island almost every single day of the last four years. The report also indicates that there are actual incidents of self-harm by desperate detainees about once a week. The conditions on Nauru and Manus Island are harmful and abusive.

*"There is absolutely no justifiable reason for offshore detention"*, says Ms Dale, *"and certainly no reason for the systematic and relentless cruelty inflicted upon those who simply asked for our help"*. We must bring an end to this cruel and pointless policy, and we must evacuate Manus Island and Nauru now.

**For further comment, please contact:**

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