

7<sup>th</sup> May 2016

## **Media Statement – Natasha Blucher**

This statement is in reference to two recently published media articles in the Guardian and the Australian newspaper, regarding a proposal for community processing of asylum seekers on Norfolk Island, co-authored by Natasha Blucher.

This proposal was first written in October 2014, with the final version written and finalized in January 2015. At that time, Blucher was not yet employed by Darwin Asylum Seeker Support and Advocacy Network. The proposal is now 18 months old, and is not one that Blucher deems to be viable or advisable at this time, either for the interests of asylum seekers or the Norfolk Island community.

At the time the proposal was written, Norfolk Island was enduring very difficult economic circumstances, and the proposal was written for presentation to the Norfolk Island Legislative Assembly.

“As a Norfolk Islander who has been living in Australia for the past 10 years, it is absolutely not my place to represent Norfolk Islanders who are currently living on Norfolk, or their views.” said Blucher. “The proposal was written 18 months ago as a suggestion for the island and its government and people, and was never meant to be pursued against their wishes.”

Further, the proposal is not one that she deems to be advisable for the wellbeing of asylum seekers in the current political climate. “At the time this proposal was written, two years of liberal government were remaining and a large number of children and their families were suffering immensely in the horrific closed camp environment on Nauru.” said Ms Blucher. “At the time I was desperately clutching at any ideas I could that might bring them their freedom, and to stop the huge developmental impact that we know detention has on children.”

“In October 2016, we as workers on Nauru were battling to prevent our clients from hurting themselves, and we were watching children and teenagers discuss self-harm and suicide as a direct result of their long-term detention and loss of hope. Anything seemed better than that.”

In the current time and political climate, Blucher re-affirms her resolve and strong view that all people seeking asylum who have been placed in regional processing centres on Nauru and Manus Island must be brought to Australia immediately. “There is simply no alternative but to close the camps and bring them here.” she says. “Regional Processing on Nauru and Manus has been a clear failure and has resulted in incredible suffering. The detention centre on Manus Island has been found to be illegal, and Nauru is experiencing an epidemic of self-harm.”

“It is time to stop these sick experiments in human misery, end the suffering and bring everyone to Australia to safety.”