



BEFRIEND A CHILD IN DETENTION
COMMUNITY PROJECT

Befriend a Child in Detention calls for action on asylum-seeking children in the lead up to the federal election

Befriend a Child in Detention, a project established by writer and educator, Dr June Factor, calls on political candidates to bring to Australia from Nauru the more than 100 children still living there in dire, detention-like conditions, and to process the claims of the 317 children in Australia living in community detention limbo.

‘Our project’s purpose is simple,’ said Dr Factor. ‘We send books and letters of friendship to children seeking asylum. We want the children and their families to know they are not forgotten.’

‘But not all our books have been delivered. And in some cases our letters have been removed from books before the books were distributed, an unnecessary cruelty. But we persevere. Hundreds of children from Australian primary schools have sent messages of friendship to the asylum-seeking children.’

Dr Factor urges political candidates to understand that people want more than talk of jobs and growth in the lead up to this election. They want Australia to take seriously its humanitarian responsibilities to asylum-seeking children.

‘Our leadership team member Bishop Philip Huggins has written a letter from the heart, **This Matters To Me**, that we are sending to all candidates today. We demand better treatment for asylum-seeking children.’ (Letter attached)

‘Some of these children have spent their whole lives in detention,’ said Dr Factor. ‘Australia has placed these children in traumatic circumstances from which they may never recover. It is nothing less than state-sanctioned child-abuse, and it must stop.’

14 June 2016

For further comments and interviews:

Dr June Factor,
Convenor,
Befriend a Child in Detention
03 94996151 or 0400 584 836
befriendachild.com



BEFRIEND A CHILD IN DETENTION
COMMUNITY PROJECT

Dear Candidate,

If you want to represent me in the next Federal Parliament, please understand **what matters to me.**

What matters to me are policies that help children seeking asylum, children who need our compassion and care.

How are we going to help these children? How can we give them back their lives? How can we heal the trauma of detention?

This matters to me.

These children matter to me. The Befriend a Child in Detention project has tried to send the children letters and books, a simple gesture of friendship that has frequently been blocked by current government policy. An unnecessary cruelty.

I want to see Australia responding with generosity to the plight of asylum seekers, especially the most vulnerable, the children. They are our responsibility.

We are a wealthy country. I want to see us being generous again with our overseas aid, so that fewer children will face the trauma of displacement.

It is our time and our responsibility to show some vision and leadership, to show compassion to those who ask for our help.

This matters to me.

It is appalling that children suffering in our care should be used as pawns in a political game.

We have political stability and freedom. We have an enthusiastic generation of young people who deserve better political leadership, who need to see their country acting as a good global citizen, upholding our treaty obligations.

We need candidates who will engage meaningfully with complex issues, and stand up for policies that reflect values of inclusion and compassion, the values that have made Australia a successful multicultural society. Starting with policies for the children who came to Australia seeking our help.

There are more than one hundred children on Nauru, who are living in detention-like conditions, trapped, with no hope for a better life.

There are more than 300 children in community detention in Australia, with no certainty and little hope.

All asylum-seeking children, and their families, including those on Nauru, should have their claims processed promptly, and all asylum-seeking and refugee children, and their families, should be resettled humanely. When this is done, the effects of our Government's cruel policies on these children can start to be addressed.

This is what matters to me.

Signed:

Befriend a Child in Detention
befriendachild.com