

**URGENT ACTION:      Email your Premier and Health Minister**  
**COVID-19: people in detention are at high risk of infection**

- The Federal Minister for Health
  - [Minister.Hunt@health.gov.au](mailto:Minister.Hunt@health.gov.au)
  - Tel: 02 6277 7220
- The Premier and the Health Minister in your state  
[Phone and Email contacts](#) here
- Your local MP  
[Search for your local MP here](#)

Please also take a few minutes to **call their offices**.  
The more people who call and email - the more likely WE CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE

### Sample email

**Subject line:**

Don't let immigration detention centres become hotspots for COVID-19

Dear Minister XXXX/ Dear Premier XXXX / Chief Medical Officer

I am writing to draw your attention to several calls for urgent action from to prevent the spread of COVID-19 in immigration detention centres, the risk this poses to detainees (many of whom are in poor health) and staff, and the resulting risk to the general community.

[Nearly 1200 doctors](#), [Experts in the control of infection diseases](#), [Human Rights Watch](#), and [Academics](#) are all calling for the release of people from detention in line with the radical protective measures already implemented to contain the spread of COVID-19. It is critical to address the risk of infection within the crowded places of detention, and in turn reduce the risk to the community.

I am especially concerned about the risk of infection for people seeking asylum and refugees held in immigration detention, as many of these people are in poor health, having been held in detention for long periods.

Detainees are 'terrified' that they will contract COVID-19:

[Detainees write to PM re risk from COVID-19](#)

Around the world governments are taking action to prevent the rapid spread of infection in places of detention by releasing people to the community wherever possible.

These people do not pose a risk to the community, and the major agencies supporting asylum seekers and other welfare organisations have all indicated they would house and support people released from detention.

We must not overlook this vulnerable group in our community in the implementation of further measures to protect the health of our community.

Act now to protect this vulnerable group, and minimise the risk to the wider community.

Yours sincerely

(name)

(address)

## BACKGROUND INFORMATION

This is a difficult time when health is a major concern for us all. With no vaccine available, we are all very aware of the advice of medical experts – that social distancing and social isolation are essential across the community to stop the spread of this highly infectious and potentially deadly virus. The situation is so serious that social distancing is now legally enforceable.

Adherence to the public health measures will protect everybody. As you know, over 1400 people are held in immigration detention, and a significant number of these people are refugees and people seeking asylum.

### Experts are calling for the release of detainees:

**Nearly 1200 doctors** [have called for the immediate release of people from detention](#) have called for the immediate release of people from detention:

- *“...Transmission of COVID-19 in institutions is a significant risk. Detainees are held in relatively crowded conditions, made worse by communal meal and activity arrangements in the hotels and detention centres. ... Detention conditions in Australia would likely lead to rapid spread, posing a risk to guards and thence to the rest of the Australian community. ... Failure to take action to release people seeking asylum and refugees from detention will not only put them at greater risk of infection (and possibly death), it also risks placing a greater burden on wider Australian society and the health care system”.*

[Experts in the control of infection diseases](#) have also called for the release of detainees to reduce this very high risk of infection for detainees and workers.

- **An [Open Letter](#) urging the Australian Government to move people urgently out of closed immigration detention, including ‘alternative places of detention’ has been released jointly by Academics for Refugees, Doctors for Refugees, and Librarians for Refugees.**  
*Please sign on to the letter if you are an academic, doctor or librarian.*

[Human Rights Watch](#) has released a statement calling for release of detainees most at risk.

### Related material:

Moz, detainee in Mantra Hotel in Melbourne  
[Detainee fears COVID-19 infection](#)

Guardian article  
[Detainees write to PM re risk from COVID-19](#)

Video clip by human rights lawyer Alison Battison  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2uWG1NJWY98>.