



Darwin Asylum Seeker Support and Advocacy Network

DASSAN Press Release: FOI Documents Reveal Extent of Self Harm Crisis

19 February 2013

Documents (attached to this email) obtained by the Darwin Asylum Seeker Support and Advocacy Network (DASSAN) reveal the appalling extent of child self harm in Darwin detention centres.

The documents detail incidents of child self harm at the Darwin Airport Lodge detention centre in during late 2010 to November 2011. It took over nine months for the documents to be released by the Department of Immigration and Citizenship following an application by DASSAN.

The incidents of self harm involve children as young as nine and ten to older teenagers.

DASSAN spokesperson, Fernanda Dahlstrom, said “these documents concern one detention centre over a relatively short period of time. Children detained in other detention centres are likely to have gone through the same trauma as these children.”

“Despite all the evidence of the harm that is done to children as a result of immigration detention, the Minister, the legal guardian of all children in detention, continues to detain children and as long as he does children will tragically continue to self harm”

“The Minister should be removed as the guardian of children – he cannot both jail the children and clam to be acting in their best interests as guardian by detaining them in detention.”

The release of the documents follows concerns raised in relation to children deported to Manus Island where they live in demountable buildings, have no access to lawyers or advocates and have already witnessed numerous suicide attempts and self harm incidents.

Ms Dalstrom added “months after the announcement that children will be sent offshore, they have still have not been told how long they will have to endure offshore detention. In the months and years to come an epidemic of child self harm is likely to occur on Manus Island. If it does, the Government cannot say they did not see it coming. They know significant trauma is caused to children by detaining them and it is appalling they will keep sending children to Manus Island.”

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<http://dassan.weebly.com/>