

## POSITION STATEMENT

**The Academy of Child and Adolescent Health urgently calls on the Federal Government to reverse its decision to cut off support and evict families and adults who are currently in community detention.** This decision is already having a devastating effect on these children, young people and their families. They are now at imminent risk of homelessness, food insecurity, further traumatisation and physical and mental health issues, including COVID-19.

The new policy grants work rights and Medicare but means people will need to find employment and housing within 3 weeks - after years in immigration detention and years without work rights, and regardless of their physical or mental health. Initiating these changes during the coronavirus pandemic and associated recession means the chance of finding immediate employment is low - this policy will result in destitution and harm to children and families.

Given this population has a well-documented history of exposure to serious trauma, this policy will exacerbate the existing risk of depression, self-harm, and suicidality, as well as family stress, which have already been worsened by isolation, the COVID-19 pandemic, and ongoing migration uncertainty. Children will also lose the protection of schooling and local connections through loss of their housing.

Australia has been commended for establishing successful public health priorities during the coronavirus pandemic, yet this policy is at odds with the principles of public health, and Australia's commitments to the Convention on the Rights of the Child. All children and young people in Australia need to be protected - with appropriate shelter and food, access to play, education and a safe environment, and through support for their families and communities. The Government's decision to remove support for these children and young people makes that goal impossible.

**The Academy of Child and Adolescent Health and Australian Refugee Child Health Network urgently call on the Federal Government to ensure these children and families maintain access to food, housing, education and a safe environment as the basic foundations for health, now and into the future.**



Endorsed by the Australian Refugee Child Health Network