

Thursday 8th April 2021

Hon Karen Andrews MP  
Minister for Home Affairs,  
Parliament House, Canberra, ACT 2600

Dear Minister Andrews,

Congratulations on your recent appointment as Australia's Minister for Home Affairs. We understand you now have authority over the future of the detention of Murugappan family.

The Academy of Child and Adolescent Health - which represents medical, nursing and other health practitioners working with children and adolescents across the region - would like to add our voice to those of other medical professionals, including the Australian Medical Association, asking you to urgently order the release of the Murugappan family, currently being held on Christmas Island.

As you know, the Murugappan family has been held in confinement on Christmas Island and previously in mainland detention for a period of more than three years. This Tamil family includes their two Australian-born daughters, Kopika and Tharnicaa. You will also be aware that the Federal Court of Australia has criticised the failure of David Coleman to act on the brief to allow Tharnicaa to make a visa application, denying her and her family "procedural fairness".

It is not only procedural fairness that has been denied this family and these children. The negative impacts of held detention on the physical, emotional and developmental wellbeing of children have been well-documented. It is difficult to find the words to adequately express the distress and frustration that doctors, health workers in general, and paediatricians in particular, feel about this unnecessarily punitive and dire situation. We strongly advocate for urgent release of this family into a community setting, which the evidence suggests will reduce the harm that is currently being inflicted on them.

As long as this family is held in their current circumstances and in a state of indefinite uncertainty, the greater the compromise that many health professionals in Australia feel. We are all proud of adhering to Codes of Ethics for health professionals in Australia, the World Medical Association Declaration of Geneva 2017, and the first principle of the Hippocratic Oath "Do no harm". We believe that the unduly prolonged suffering this family is experiencing goes against all of our fundamental professional principles, as well as our collective Australian values.

Our hope is that you are willing to act on the best interests of these children and expedite this family's release. We would be pleased to provide you with the evidence to back our position if you would find it helpful.

We look forward to hearing from you in the near future.

With kind regards,

Dr Jenny Proimos MBBS MPH FRACP FSAHM  
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Endorsed by the Australian Refugee Child Health Network