

7 April 2021

Hon Nanaia Mahuta  
Minister of Foreign Affairs

By email to: [Nanaia.Mahuta@parliament.govt.nz](mailto:Nanaia.Mahuta@parliament.govt.nz)

Tēnā koe Hon Nanaia Mahuta

## **Re: Deportation of New Zealanders from Australia**

I am writing to you on behalf of the Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Psychiatrists (RANZCP) to express our concerns regarding the Australian Government's deportation policies and practices, which we consider to be racist and discriminatory against New Zealanders. The RANZCP welcomes the New Zealand Government's response to these issues, and we support your continued advocacy.

### **About the Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Psychiatrists (RANZCP)**

The RANZCP is the principal organisation representing the medical speciality of psychiatry in New Zealand and Australia and is responsible for training, educating and representing psychiatrists on policy issues. The RANZCP represents more than 6700 members (including 865 New Zealand members) and is guided on policy matters by a range of expert committees.

### **Australia's deportation policies are an ongoing issue for the health and human rights of New Zealanders**

#### *Health issues*

The RANZCP has [serious concerns](#) regarding the impact on the mental health of New Zealanders as a result of forced deportations from Australia. The policy disconnects whānau – the majority of which are Māori and Pasifika – and returns people to a country where they may have no close supports. There is a significant body of evidence showing that forced separation can have long-term emotional, social, and economic impacts on families and especially children.

Many of the people deported have complex needs, which may be exacerbated by interruptions to treatment and recovery. As well as impacting individuals and their whānau, the policy is increasing pressure on our health and corrections systems.

#### *Deportation of minors*

It is especially troubling that [minors](#) are being deported. The removal of a child from their home is a highly stressful experience and even short periods of detention have been found to impact children's function. To deport a child from the country they have grown up in will undoubtedly cause significant trauma to the child and their whānau.

### *Human rights issues*

We consider that the deportation policies, especially those that allow deportation of a person who has not been convicted of an offence, are counter to human rights – for example, the well-established right to be presumed innocent until proven guilty.

We also consider that deportation of minors breaches the UN Convention of the Rights of the Child, especially the principle that “the best interests of the child shall be a primary consideration” (Article 3).

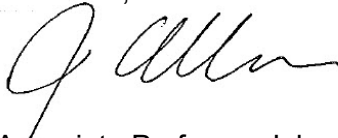
### **Potential avenues for resolution**

We encourage you to discuss the issue with your Australian colleagues. We have also written to the Australian Minister for Home Affairs, Karen Andrews, to note our concerns and advocate for policy changes.

Failing resolution with the Australian government, we encourage you to raise human rights concerns in international forums. The detrimental policies have been ongoing for several years and only seem to have escalated over time. We note that we wrote to your predecessor, Right Honourable Winston Peters, about this issue in 2019.

If you would like to discuss the matters raised in this letter, please contact Rosemary Matthews, National Manager, New Zealand. Rosemary can be contacted via [rosemary.matthews@ranzcp.org](mailto:rosemary.matthews@ranzcp.org) or by phone on (04) 472 7565.

Nāku noa, nā



Associate Professor John Allan  
**President**



Dr Mark Lawrence  
**Chair, Tu Te Akaaka Roa – New Zealand  
National Committee**

Ref: 2218

Attachment and hyperlink: [RANZCP Position Statement 52: Mental health needs of child asylum seekers and refugees](#)