

MEDIA RELEASE
29 July 2008



Psychologists support detention review

The Australian Psychological Society today heartily congratulates the Rudd Government, and Senator Chris Evans, Minister for Immigration and Citizenship, for their review of the way Australia has been treating asylum seekers. The APS supports the humane decision to limit detention to the small number of people who pose a risk to the community or of absconding, while others are reviewed while living in the community.

APS President Amanda Gordon says that this decision is a response to the solid psychological research that has shown that mandatory detention policies have led to long-term mental health problems in innocent people. The wider community has also made clear its abhorrence of locking people up when they need our help and support.

"International evidence is that few asylum seekers pose risk of any sort to the communities in which they seek to live, and the process of investigation of cases to determine eligibility for residence can be made just as easily when people live in safety within the community," Gordon said.

"The Australian Psychological Society will continue to work with the Department to ensure that those people who are placed in detention as a last resort receive humane treatment and support for the time that they are detained," she said.

The Government's rejection of the notion that long-term detention is an effective or civilised response to the plight of desperate people is long overdue.

APS psychologists are hopeful that today's announcement signals a more compassionate and just approach to immigration and refugee policies. We urge the government to act quickly to resolve longstanding asylum claims, and to continue to improve the situation for those whose residency status has not been clarified. Only then can we truly hold up our heads within the international community, as a country that acts on its humanitarian obligations.

The APS is the largest professional association for psychologists in Australia, representing more than 16,500 members. The APS is committed to advancing psychology as a discipline and profession. It spreads the message that psychologists make a difference to peoples' lives, through improving psychological knowledge and community wellbeing.

For media enquiries, please contact:
Ellise Chapman
Marketing and Public Relations Coordinator
Australian Psychological Society
T: 03 8662 3301
www.psychology.org.au