

# A last resort

## Evidence from the 2003 *National Inquiry into Children in Immigration Detention*

Read through the following quotes. These are things that asylum seeker children told the Australian Human Rights Commission about their time in Australian immigration detention centres.

### Quote 1

I think that the children should be free and when they are there for one year or two years they are just wasting their time, they could go to school and they could learn something. They could be free. Instead they are like a bird in a cage.

Ten-year-old Afghan girl found to be a refugee, Perth focus group, June 2002.

### Quote 2

There are children who have been there for a very long time – two to three years – and they have done things that are very distressing, like they went up the trees and they wanted to throw themselves, trying to commit suicide. There were kids that actually stitched their mouths. Things that are so traumatic that we are now having nightmares on a daily basis.

Former detainee boy, Perth focus group, June 2002.

### Quote 3

When we were in the detention centre and someone was sick, headache or sick and they would say, 'Just drink water'. ... My sister has a problem with her eyes. She said her eyes were so painful and she went to the doctor who said, 'You just have to drink water'. Now we come to Sydney and the doctor says she has a problem in her eyes.

Teenage girl, Sydney focus group, September 2002.

### Quote 4

In Port Hedland there is a school outside ... I used to stand on a chair and look out at them. I like to see what they looked like in their school uniform. There was an officer ... and she pulled my shoulder down and put me on the ground and said, 'You are not allowed to look at those people because they are different to you'. And I was like 'Why are they different to me? Because they know English and they are Australian, does that make them better?'

Teenage boy, Perth focus group, June 2002.

### Quote 5

After one month they brought one woman but you don't know who she is – we are just UAMs (unaccompanied minors) with her. At this age we need mother and father – we not leave mother and father unless there are big things to make us leave our families.

Unaccompanied child, Woomera, January 2002.