



'A last resort?'

Report of the National Inquiry into Children in Immigration Detention

DETENTION STATISTICS

A total of 976 children were in immigration detention in 1999-2000; 1,923 children in 2000-2001; 1,696 children in 2001-2002 and 703 children in 2002-2003. Most of these children arrived by boat.

The total number of unauthorised arrival children who applied for refugee protection visas between 1 July 1999 and 30 June 2003 was 2,184. These figures do not include children transferred to and detained on Nauru and Manus Island (Papua New Guinea).

Between 1 July 1999 and 30 June 2003, 2,184 children arrived in Australia **without a valid visa** and sought asylum (unauthorised arrivals) – all these children **were** held in immigration detention while their refugee status was being determined. More than 92% of these children were found to be refugees and were granted a temporary protection visa. For some nationalities the success rate was even higher (98% Iraqi; 95% Afghan).

Between 1 July 1999 and 30 June 2003, 3,125 children arrived in Australia **with a valid visa** and then sought asylum (authorised arrivals) – these children **were not** held in immigration detention while their refugee status was being determined. Only 25% of these children were found to be refugees. The top three countries of origin for authorised arrivals were Fiji, Indonesia and Sri Lanka.

The highest number of children in detention at any one time between 1 January 1999 and 1 January 2004 was 842 (on 1 September 2001). Of this number, 456 were at the Woomera detention centre.

When the Inquiry was announced in late November 2001, there were over 700 children in immigration detention. By the time of the Inquiry's public hearing with the Department in December 2002, the number had reduced to 139. In December 2003, there were 111 children in immigration detention.

Since 1999, children have been detained for increasingly longer periods of time. By the beginning of 2003, the average detention period for a child in immigration detention was one year, three months and 17 days. As at 26 December 2003, the average length of detention had increased to one year, eight months and 11 days.

The longest a child has ever been in immigration detention is five years, five months and 20 days. This child and his mother were released from Port Hedland detention centre on 12 May 2000, after eventually being assessed as refugees.

More boys than girls have been held in immigration detention. However, the percentage of girls has increased since 1999. Between 1 July 1999 and 30 June 2003, 37% of asylum seeker children in detention were girls. The majority of children in detention were under 12 years of age.

Some infants (0-4 years) spent substantial portions of their lives in immigration detention. On 30 June 2000 there were 164 infants in detention. Five of them had spent more than 18 months in detention. On 30 June 2001 there were 144 infants in detention. Two of these children had spent over two and a half years in detention – more than half of their lives.

**All statistics are sourced from 'A last resort' the Report of the National Inquiry into Children in Immigration Detention.*