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AUSTRALIAN MEDICAL
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Dear

The AMA is urging all MPs and Senators to advocate from within the Australian Parliament for the Government to adopt a more compassionate and transparent policy for the health and wellbeing of refugees and asylum seekers in the care of the Australian Government.

Our immediate priority concern is the physical and mental health and wellbeing of refugees and asylum seekers, especially children, on Nauru. The medical situation for these people has been described by health experts, including medical staff who have worked on Nauru, as extremely critical and deteriorating. It is a humanitarian emergency.

There are now too many credible reports concerning the effects of long-term detention and uncertainty on the physical and mental health of asylum seekers, coupled with the immediate urgent issues of fluid and food refusal. It is within the power of the Parliament to move on this issue and play its part in allowing traumatised people to begin rebuilding their lives.

Australia is a caring nation with a long history of compassion and respect for human rights. We need to show the Australian people and the world that we are still a caring nation.

The AMA believes that all asylum seeker children and their families on Nauru must be removed and given access to physical and mental health care of an appropriate standard. For some of these children, it is a matter of short-term survival.

We also want the Government to facilitate access to Nauru for a delegation of Australian medical professionals to assess the health and welfare of child refugees and asylum seekers. This includes access to the children and their families and/or carers, the IHMS medical professionals administering to the children, and any Nauruan Government officials administering to the children.

Membership of the delegation would be determined in consultation with the AMA and the delegation would make public the findings of its inspections and interviews to assure the Australian public that the Australian Government has done all that is possible to protect the health and wellbeing of asylum seekers and refugees.

The AMA also holds concerns for the health and wellbeing of all asylum seekers and refugees in Papua New Guinea on Manus Island and in Port Moresby, and we seek assurances from the Australian and PNG Governments that the standard of health care in PNG is of an appropriate standard.

In April 2017, the Senate Legal and Constitutional Affairs Committee released the report of its inquiry into asylum seekers on Nauru. The inquiry made two recommendations about the availability of medical services and medical transfers:

- **Recommendation 1:** The committee recommends that the Department of Immigration and Border Protection, as a matter of urgency, commission an external review of its medical transfer procedures in offshore processing centres.
- **Recommendation 2:** The committee recommends that the Australian Government undertake to seek advice in relation to whether improvements are required to the medical treatment options available to asylum seekers and refugees in the Republic of Nauru and Papua New Guinea, particularly mental health services.

The Government has not yet responded to the inquiry.

Your advocacy for quality health care for people who have fled their homeland because of war, conflict, persecution, or fear – to seek a better life for their families – would be greatly appreciated.

The AMA encourages you provide a voice to help these vulnerable human beings.

I wrote to the Prime Minister the Hon Scott Morrison MP on this subject yesterday.

Please contact me at president@ama.com.au if you would like further information on the AMA's policies on the health of refugees and asylum seekers.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Tony Bartone', written in a cursive style.

Dr Tony Bartone
President