



ACIPC
Australasian College
for Infection Prevention and Control

19 March 2020

We represent the Australasian Society for Infectious Diseases and the Australian College of Infection Prevention and Control, the peak professional bodies for infectious diseases physicians and infection control practitioners respectively.

We note today that the Prime Minister, on expert medical advice, has recommended that all people practice social distancing, and if unwell, self-isolation to prevent the spread of COVID-19 to other people.

We understand that around 1400 asylum seekers and other non-citizens are being held in detention in crowded conditions that would preclude adequate social distancing or self-isolation. This would potentially pose a risk to their health in the event of an outbreak of COVID-19, as outbreaks in other crowded settings, including detention facilities, have been well documented to date. This would also potentially pose a risk to staff who work at immigration detention facilities and, through the amplification of infection, the broader Australian community.

We urge the Commonwealth government to consider the release of detainees into suitable housing in the community if they do not pose a significant security or health risk.

As a minimum standard, we would recommend that detainees should be held in single rooms with their own bathroom facilities. While this would not fully address the risk associated with COVID-19, and it certainly would not be as effective as reducing the overall numbers in immigration detention facilities, it would go some way to reducing the risk and could be considered the absolute minimum necessary step.

Yours sincerely

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