

08 October 2012

Ms Julie Dennett
Committee Secretary
Standing Committee on Legal and Constitutional Affairs
PO Box 6100
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

By email to: legcon.sen@aph.gov.au

Dear Ms Dennett

Re: Inquiry into the Migration Amendment (Health Care for Asylum Seekers) Bills 2012

The Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Psychiatrists (RANZCP) welcomes the opportunity to provide a submission to the *Inquiry into the Migration Amendment (Health Care for Asylum Seekers) Bills 2012*. The RANZCP considers the mental health of asylum seekers an important issue and has consistently raised concerns regarding the treatment and mandatory detention of asylum seekers in Australia.

The RANZCP supports the establishment of a panel of medical and psychological experts to oversee the health of asylum seekers in offshore detention. Such detention negatively impacts asylum seekers mental health, with many suffering from high rates of post-traumatic stress disorder, depression and anxiety.

In addition to the establishment of an expert medical panel, the RANZCP advocates for better access and funding of medical and psychiatric health services for asylum seekers in detention. This will assist with maintaining the health of asylum seekers whilst they await decisions on their asylum applications.

The RANZCP refers the Inquiry to the RANZCP's position statement *The provision of mental health services to asylum seekers and refugees*. This position statement can be accessed on our website at: www.ranzcp.org/Files/ranzcp-attachments/Resources/College_Statements/Position_Statements/ps46-pdf.aspx.

If you would like any further information, or would like to set up a meeting, please contact Dr Anne Ellison, General Manager, Practice, Policy and Projects, via _____ or _____

Yours sincerely

Dr Maria Tomasic
President

Ref: 2626