



19 October 2018

The Hon Scott Morrison MP
Prime Minister
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Prime Minister,

President
David K Martin

Vice-President
Andrew M Ellis

Second Vice-President
Michael J Gillespie

Chair of Education
and Training
Omar Khorshid

Chair of Professional
Conduct and Standards
Colin Whitewood

Scientific Secretary
Ian A Harris

State Chair Director
Marinis Pirpiris

General Director
and Treasurer
Maurizio Damiani

General Director
Christopher N Morrey

AORA President
Christopher Conyard

Chief Executive Officer
and Company Secretary
Adrian R Cosenza

The Australian Orthopaedic Association (AOA) is a member-based organisation and is the peak professional body for orthopaedic surgeons in Australia. It was established over 80 years ago.

AOA provides high quality specialist education, training and continuing professional development. AOA is committed to ensuring the highest possible standard of orthopaedic care and is the leading authority in the provision of orthopaedic information to the community.

AOA stands united with other medical colleges, associations and societies in calling on you to transfer the asylum seeker and refugee children and their families off Nauru for medical care appropriate to their needs.

The medical situation is urgent for this vulnerable group of children. Medical experts, including doctors who have worked on Nauru, have spoken repeatedly about their concerns. They report widespread, significant deteriorations in physical and mental health. There are disturbing reports of young children attempting suicide by lethal means and withdrawing from their environment until they are almost comatose (increasingly called resignation syndrome). This is an extreme physical response to sustained psychological trauma, and is life threatening. A growing number have been transferred by order of the Australian Federal Court for treatment.

AOA is aware that that there has been substantive investment by the Australian and Nauruan governments who provide health care on Nauru. We are aware that this includes provision of specialist mental health professionals including child psychiatrists. While we are grateful that these services continue to be extended, this will never bring resolution to these children's symptoms. The circumstances of an involuntary and indefinite stay on Nauru directly contributes to their deterioration in mental state, which is why extending services on the island can never be the solution.

AOA wishes to state explicitly that our call to transfer should in no way be viewed as a negative reflection on Nauru's population, government or physical environment. The severe adverse physical and mental health effect of involuntary and indefinite stays have been widely reported around the world.

While we acknowledge the complexity of the situation, and that this in part results from a sincere desire to stop deaths at sea, we cannot accept that one policy necessitates harm to innocent children.

Our peak bodies have repeatedly offered to work with the government to provide independent oversight and expertise. This offer was repeated as part of the AMA President's letter that you received on September 19, 2018.

We ask that you reconsider.



AOA

AUSTRALIAN
ORTHOPAEDIC
ASSOCIATION

AOA is deeply uneasy that expert medical recommendations are unheeded by our government. It is a dangerous precedent for other areas of great health need across our communities.

It falls within our mandate as doctors to comment on and advocate for those requiring care within our health system. We undergo years of rigorous training and ongoing oversight to provide the Australian community with excellent medical care. We believe that this care should be delivered without regard for race, age, gender, ability level, or location.

AOA now calls on you to show your commitment to the strong health care system we have in Australia, which we are the guardians of, by accepting the recommendations of many medical experts and bringing these children and families to Australia so their health care needs can be met adequately, and with appropriate clinical oversight.

Yours sincerely,

David Martin
President