

MEDIA RELEASE

Ombudsman's report highlights concerns over mental health at Christmas Island

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The lack of adequate mental health services for detainees at Christmas Island detention facilities has been highlighted by a report by the Commonwealth Ombudsman.

The Ombudsman's report into immigration processes on Christmas Island has recommended that detainees be moved to the Australian mainland "so as to address overcrowding, as well as the need to address the shortage of facilities and services, in particular mental health services."

The Mental Health Council of Australia (MHCA) is concerned that detainees and asylum seekers should have access to proper and culturally appropriate mental health services.

The Ombudsman is clearly concerned about the provision of mental health services on Christmas Island and has recommended that the Department of Immigration "should address a shortage of facilities on Christmas Island as a matter of urgency so as to provide appropriate services for detainees requiring health services, especially those relating to mental health".

The report also notes that the Ombudsman has received complaints from detainees and their representatives about a range of matters including access to medical and mental health services, including torture and trauma counselling, and the availability and use of interpreters.

The Ombudsman's report highlights the pressure on services at Christmas Island, and in particular mental health services.

The MHCA calls on the Federal Government to ensure that all detainees, especially those on Christmas Island, have access to specialised and appropriate mental health care.

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