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MEDIA RELEASE

In relation to the Australian Human Rights Commission report "*The Forgotten Children: National Inquiry into Children in Immigration Detention 2014*", ("the Report"), John Fraser, President of the Association of Labor Lawyers Qld (Inc) states:

"The Report by the Australian Human Rights Commission into children in immigration detention appears clear – detention exposes children to the risk of harm with reports of:

- *57 serious assaults*
- *233 assaults involving children*
- *207 incidents of actual self-harm*
- *436 incidents of threatened self-harm*
- *33 incidents of reported sexual assault (the majority involving children)*
- *183 incidents of voluntary starvation/hunger strikes (with a further 27 involving children); and*
- *105 children in detention were assessed under the Department's Psychological Support Program as being of 'high imminent risk' or 'moderate risk' of suicide or self-harm and required (10 were less than 10 years old)*

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While the Report notes the role of successive governments in the detention of refugees, including the role of the Labor Government, the Report must be viewed as a wakeup call and must not be ignored.

Apportioning blame for children in detention aids no-one and fails to recognise the plight of those children currently affected by ongoing detention.

The Prime Minister, Tony Abbott, has said he [feels no guilt](#), that the most compassionate thing to do is to stop the boats and asserts the Report is biased.

It must not be forgotten that the Coalition [government promised](#) the release of existing children in detention before Christmas 2014 in exchange for support of largely adverse legislative changes to the refugee laws.

It is within the power of the Coalition government to remove all children from detention to prevent the risk of harm, yet it chooses not to do so unless it appears to benefit them.

The disregard by Mr Abbott and the Coalition government for the welfare of children in detention is appalling and the continued exposure of children to the risk of harm, assault and/or abuse is unacceptable."

Enquires - John Fraser on 0410 417 654 or jaf1954@bigpond.net.au.