Child asylum seekers have a right to an education not detention

The Abbott Government must ensure child asylum seekers are removed from detention centres and provided with an education, the AEU said today.

AEU Federal President Correna Haythorpe said the Human Rights Commission report “The Forgotten Children” had detailed serious violations of the rights of children in detention centres to access an education.

“This report details the shocking treatment of children in Australian detention centres and the horrendous damage it is doing to them,” Ms Haythorpe said.

“It makes clear that long-term detention of children causes mental illness, trauma and harm which will affect them for their entire lives.

“Among the many serious issues raised is the lack of education for many of these children. Many have been denied education for months on end, or accompanied to school by guards.

“This is particularly serious because we know that education, conducted outside detention centres allowing children to engage with the community, is a protective factor against the long-term effects of detention.

“Many of these children have suffered traumatic experiences before arriving in Australia and we owe it to them to ensure their traumas are not worsened.

“It should never be policy to deprive children of an education by holding them in detention centres.

Ms Haythorpe said that schools needed to be properly equipped to support and educate asylum seeker and refugee children, including giving them the opportunity to learn English.

“Schools in which asylum seeker children are enrolling must be provided with extra staff and physical resources to overcome any educational barriers experienced by these children,” Ms Haythorpe said.

“We support the Human Rights Commission’s recommendation that children held on Christmas Island who have missed out on schooling be assessed to determine what support they need to meet learning benchmarks for their age.”

Authorised by Sally Dennis, General Secretary, The State School Teachers' Union of W.A.
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