

# The Australian Association for Infant Mental Health, Inc. (AAIMHI)

## Infants in Immigration Detention (2015)

### A Position Statement

Multiple immigration crises around the world place infants and toddlers at extraordinary risk. The Australian Association for Infant Mental Health, Inc. (AAIMHI) believes that we must give voice to these infants and their families. Members of AAIMHI recently completed a position paper to express concern about the plight of very young children and their families who, in seeking safety and security in a new home in Australia, are placed in immigration detention. This AAIMHI Position Statement aims to speak clearly and to be widely heard. The AAIMHI leadership has provided a brief explanation of the mandatory detention policy and has given permission to WAIMH to include an excerpt from their position paper. Both appear below, as well as reference to the full paper on the AAIMHI website.

### A Brief History

In 1992 the Australian government introduced mandatory detention for any person arriving in the country without a valid visa. Since then, in order to stop boats of asylum seekers coming to Australia, the policy has hardened to become indefinite mandatory detention and offshore processing. Concerns have been raised regarding the negative mental health consequences for adults and children detained in this way but there is little information about the impact on infants who are born in detention.

An Excerpt from the AAIMHI Position Statement:

“A recent (May 2015) Senate Estimates session heard that one child had been in detention for 1774 days. It was also revealed that the average time a child is

held in detention is 345 days and that there were 231 children held in on-shore and off-shore detention facilities...Unpublished observational and anecdotal data, and verbal reports from the parents themselves, include a range of infant behaviours that are consistent with signs of disturbed social, emotional, and cognitive development.”

To view the entire paper, please go to the AAIMHI website:

<http://www.aaimhi.org/viewStory/Policies+and+Submissions>

### Author guidelines for Perspectives in Infant Mental Health

- APA, sixth edition, for style
- 12 point font
- Double spaced
- 250 words per page
- Articles of varying length are welcome, however, length should not exceed 15 pages Word-format
- Send pictures and tables in separate files, with a resolution of at least 72 pixels/inch
- Manuscripts are accepted throughout the year
- Articles much shorter than 15 pages are also welcome for submission
- Send the submission to:  
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