



STATEMENT

**THE HON RICHARD MARLES MP
SHADOW MINISTER FOR IMMIGRATION AND BORDER
PROTECTION
MEMBER FOR CORIO**

**PARLIAMENT MUST ENSHRINE MANDATORY REPORTING OF CHILD ABUSE
IN AUSTRALIAN FUNDED DETENTION FACILITIES**

Today I will introduce a Private Members Bill that mandates the reporting of child abuse in all offshore and onshore detention facilities.

The Migration Amendment (Mandatory Reporting) Bill 2015 will seek to amend the Migration Act to make it unequivocal that if an immigration or border protection worker reasonably believes that a minor has suffered or is suffering a reportable assault in detention, the worker must within 24 hours alert the Australian Border Force Commissioner.

There should be absolutely no doubt that staff, including medical contractors working in these facilities not only have the freedom to report abuse, but have a legal obligation to do so.

This Bill seeks to also make it an offence if a worker fails to report an assault.

We need to send a clear message that all Australian funded facilities, whether on shore or off shore need to be safe, humane centres where people can have their claims processed without fear of violence or assault.

A Shorten Labor Government will also appoint an independent children's advocate to ensure their rights and interests are protected.

The treatment of men, women and children in detention by the Liberal Government has been woeful.

Mr Dutton's response to the legitimate concerns of health professionals on the weekend about children in detention has been both cringe-worthy and callous.

As a former health minister he should know better.

These health professionals are dealing with complex cases and children that have gone through some pretty difficult experiences fleeing persecution and war. Concerned doctors and nurses deserve more than a one line response from the Government.

Detention is no place for children - most fair minded people would agree. The overwhelming number of children that are in detention facilities are with their families and the best thing we can do to get them out of detention is to quickly process refugee claims and move kids and their families into the community.

Rather than repeating slogans, the Government should focus its efforts on speeding up processing of refugee claims so kids and their families aren't left to languish in detention centres.

Where kids are in detention - we need to make sure they are afforded first rate health, mental health and education services and that any cases of abuse or mistreatment are the subject of mandatory reporting.

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