

**FREE**

**THE CHILDREN**

**DIY KIT**

# #FREE THE CHILDREN

## WHAT IS THE FREE THE CHILDREN ACTION

ACEIDC's many supporters and members made it clear, they want to take a stand against the ongoing abuse of children in Australia's immigration detention system. So, we developed an action to facilitate positive action on any scale.

Free The Children was launched in Sydney with five days of a very public presence. An artist was commissioned to create a public sculpture representing the indefinite immigration detention of 1023\* children. This was not just a passive, emotive piece of art but an interactive social action where people acted to free children.

Passers by were able to enter the 'cage / net' and remove a doll, they could reflect on the feeling of imprisonment. You'll see some powerful images on social media using the #freethechildren tag.

Each doll was wearing an ID tag with a number, as each detained child is forced to wear everyday.



The person taking action removed the doll's ID, kept part of the card as a reminder of their positive action and signed the other section on the spot urging their local MP to take action to protect children.

Cards will be centrally collected, we will meet with MPs and let Minister Morrison know just how far and wide this action has spread.

Sydney was a great start **but the real impact will be your version of this action in your community.**

### Who are the ACEIDC?

We are the Australian Coalition to End Immigration Detention of Children. A coalition made up of several different organisations working to ensure Australia stops the immigration detention of children.

You can find out more about who we are, and our past actions here:

 [www.endchilddetentionoz.com](http://www.endchilddetentionoz.com)

 [www.facebook.com/endchilddetentionoz](https://www.facebook.com/endchilddetentionoz)



\*Statistics are current at June 2014, for updated statistics visit chilout.org

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## WHAT'S IN THIS DIY KIT?

All the information you need to run this action yourself. A checklist, templates, contact details if you need anything from us, images from our Sydney event for inspiration, creative ideas, FAQ, links to print your own materials and **MANY THANKS**.

We truly believe that grass-roots action is essential if we are to see policy change. That means **YOU** and your community showing that you will not stand for the present treatment of children seeking Australia's protection.

There is no timeframe to this action. Until there is legislation and policy in place protecting children we will continue to take a stand. Host the action in line with a big community event, a key calendar date, any time that suits.

You do not need an artist, a big budget or a fancy printer - this action is designed to be effective on any scale.



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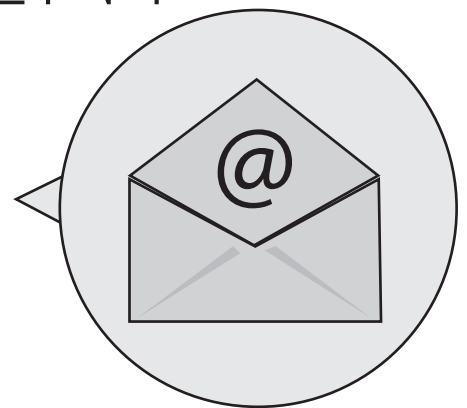
# #FREE THE CHILDREN



## CHECK LIST FOR RUNNING YOUR OWN EVENT

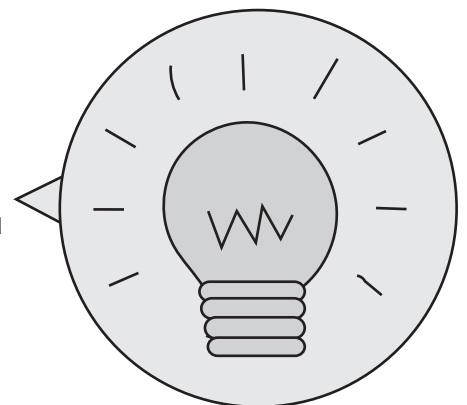
### STEP 1: GET IN TOUCH WITH US

Contact the Coalition to End Child Detention Australia, or your AYCS National Campaign Coordinator, Sophie Stewart [sophie@aycs.org.au](mailto:sophie@aycs.org.au). If you give us enough notice, we can mail you some "ID Cards". We'd also like to keep track of how many electorates this action is reaching and be able to answer any questions you may have.



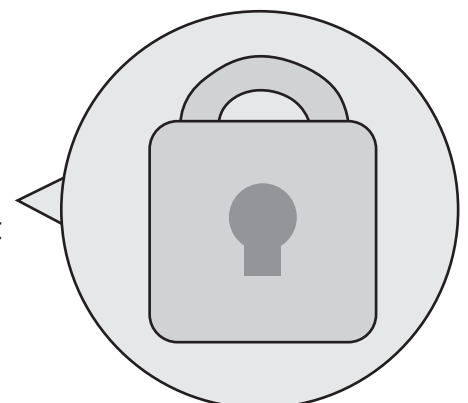
### STEP 2: THINK ABOUT YOUR SET UP

The Sydney cage was big enough to walk in, yours could be symbolic, it could fit one doll or it could fit 1,023\*. It could be a fence with the ID tags tied on to it and have people come and remove them. It could be a chicken coop (clean!) filled with dolls with a door for people to enter. You can have a few meetings to iron out the details but you'll need a rough plan / dimensions in order to get approval to use the space you're after.



### STEP 3: SECURE A SPOT

Somewhere with lots of pedestrian traffic, or is it for your school, university, church community to take action. Easy access for media, good vantage point for photos etc. There may be forms and possibly a small fee involved in booking a space. You could team up with a local school, community group etc if there are insurance needs. Do you want the action 'up' for one day, a weekend, a week. We had ours live outside Sydney's Queen Victoria Building for five days to take advantage of the city workers as well as weekend visitors. This was possible with a BIG team of volunteers on a roster.



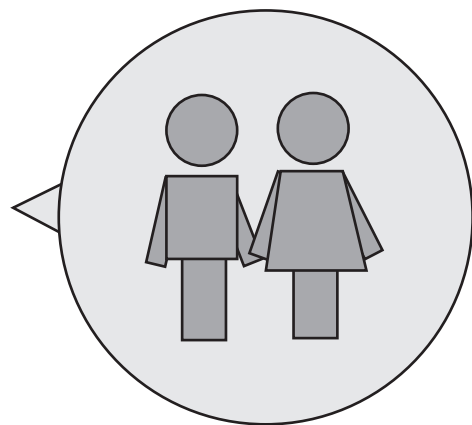
\*Statistics are current at June 2014, for updated statistics visit [chilout.org](http://chilout.org)

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## STEP 4: LOCK IN VOLUNTEERS

Of course there's the coordination before the event, gathering dolls, organising materials, booking the space etc. Then for the time your action is 'up' you will need people around to chat to the public, hand out flyers, keep everything running smoothly etc. (there's a FAQ sheet on page 11 of this kit, volunteers do not need to be refugee experts at all, just friendly). Delegate! Make sure your vollies have a copy of the FAQ, are familiar with the materials and how the action works. We had so many helpers in Sydney that we prepared a roster included on page 16 of this kit if you need one.

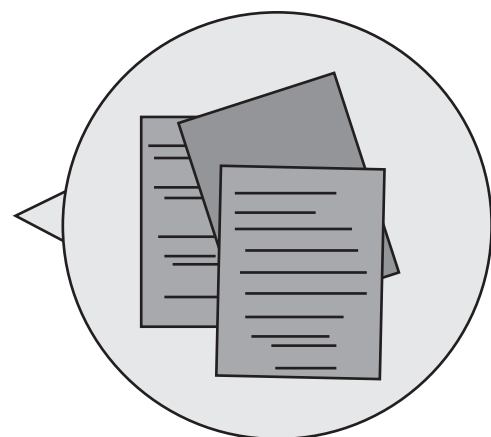


## STEP 5: MATERIALS

Make a list of what you need for the action. Tick off who is responsible and does it all fit within your budget!

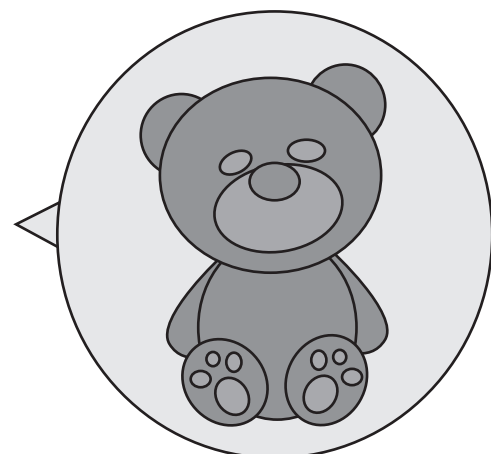
### PRINTED COALITION MATERIALS

All materials are available at [www.endchilddetentionoz.com/materials/](http://www.endchilddetentionoz.com/materials/) These can be printed at home / office or at your local printers (files are set up to meet their requirements and they look terrific on thicker paper professionally done – get a quote, you may be surprised!). If you give us enough notice, we can send you the ID tags and while stocks last, the info flyers all printed 'fancy'. Posters are designed to print from A4 right through to A1, whatever your budget.



### DOLLS

Ask your local community to donate second hand dolls, or chat to your local charity store about having some on-loan, borrow your friends, substitute with teddy bears etc - your imagination is the only limit here.



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## CAGE MATERIALS

These could be purchased from your local hardware, sourced from donations, scrap material, rubbish drives, or borrowed. We made one for \$50 and filmed the process – check out the short clip for inspiration [www.endchilddetentionoz.com/free-the-children/](http://www.endchilddetentionoz.com/free-the-children/) Options include;

- Gabions (google it, they're easy),
- Fencing material clipped together. This comes in rolls at many heights, it's lightweight and could be placed around star pickets, wooden stakes, can using fencing wire or cable ties to hold it together. Can use wire cutters to make a 'door' so people could bend down and reach in to remove a doll (make sure there's no sharp edges)
- Any animal cages you may have. Even a small birdcage with a few dolls in it would be very moving.
- Use an existing fence and place a barricade on the other three sides, like a pen. People could enter or you could symbolically have dolls inside and attach the ID tags to the fence.
- We used cord in an adjustable knot to put the ID tags around dolls necks. You could use cable ties, large rubber bands, ribbon. We didn't want to have to use scissors in the public space, but think about what works in your situation.

## SAFE PLACE

At the Sydney installation we wanted our freed dolls to go somewhere child-friendly, somewhere fun and safe. We used astro-turf, chalk, a blow up swimming pool and plastic balls to make a fun space where people could put the doll they freed. It's completely up to you (your space, time and materials available) whether you add an element like this. It could be as simple as using chalk to draw a big flower / love heart etc on the ground and placing dolls on it / around it. Just the symbolism of taking the doll from an unsafe, dark environment to one that is safe and child-friendly.



A child participating in #FreeTheChildren took a doll out of the cage and placed it on the fake grass area of the installation, then played with the dolls & toys

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## STEP 6: PUBLICITY PUBLIC PROMOTION

Think about the timing. Is there already a local event on, could you leverage off the passers-by, or would it be a clash (pick another date). Have you left enough time for advertising, finding volunteers and inviting dignitaries. If it's on campus, at church etc have be aware of newsletter deadlines etc, make sure it's listed on facebook pages, get some posters up to let people know it's happening. Perhaps you're holding it in such a prominent place for a few days and word will quickly spread. Is there a local 'what's on' calendar or facebook page you could advertise on. Are there some much followed social media 'stars' in your area who could promote the event for you.

**GET INVOLVED**  
**MOBILE** #KIDS LIKE ME  
#IN CHILD DETENTION EXCHANGE  
BLOGGING COMMUNITY MESSAGE  
**SOCIAL** #YOUNG AND FREE

COMMUNICATION MEDIA  
PUBLIC INFORMATION  
**AWARENESS**

#FREE THE CHILDREN NETWORKING

### INVITATIONS

No matter who your local Mayor or local Federal MP is, consider inviting them along. There's a template invite on page 14 in this kit! Local Councillors, senior faith leaders, people in leadership positions in your community – think outside the square here, if the local Fire Chief or Captain of the netball team is much loved, others will be likely to pay attention to their humane stance and local media are likely to cover their involvement.

### PRESS/MEDIA

There's a template press release on page 15 of this kit. It is a good idea to send one out a day or two before your action 'opens'. If you don't get media but you have some great photos of the action, send a follow up media release with some of these images. Contact details for your local radio, tv and print media will be easily available online.



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Participants took photos at the event and posted them to social media using #FreeTheChildren

## STEP 7: INSPIRE OTHERS

Make sure you take photos of your action, use the #freethechildren. If others see that you've taken action, they may do it too! Send us any feedback, [team@chilout.org](mailto:team@chilout.org)

## STEP 8: SEND YOUR ACTION CARDS

Once you're all done, please send the completed action cards to the Sydney PO Box noted on them. Take some photos of your group with your collected pile #freethechildren

## STEP 9: DO YOU WANT FOLLOW UP?

Not for everyone, we know. But if you collected heaps of cards, had a great public reaction and would like to follow up with your local MP we can assist in arranging a meeting. Perhaps a member of our coalition could accompany a member of your group to a meeting, there may have been other FreeThChildren actions in your electorate, the number of cards collected overall could be huge. MPs know what we think, it's terrific for them to hear directly from their voters - let's chat about it, get in touch with Sophie Peer, [team@chilout.org](mailto:team@chilout.org)

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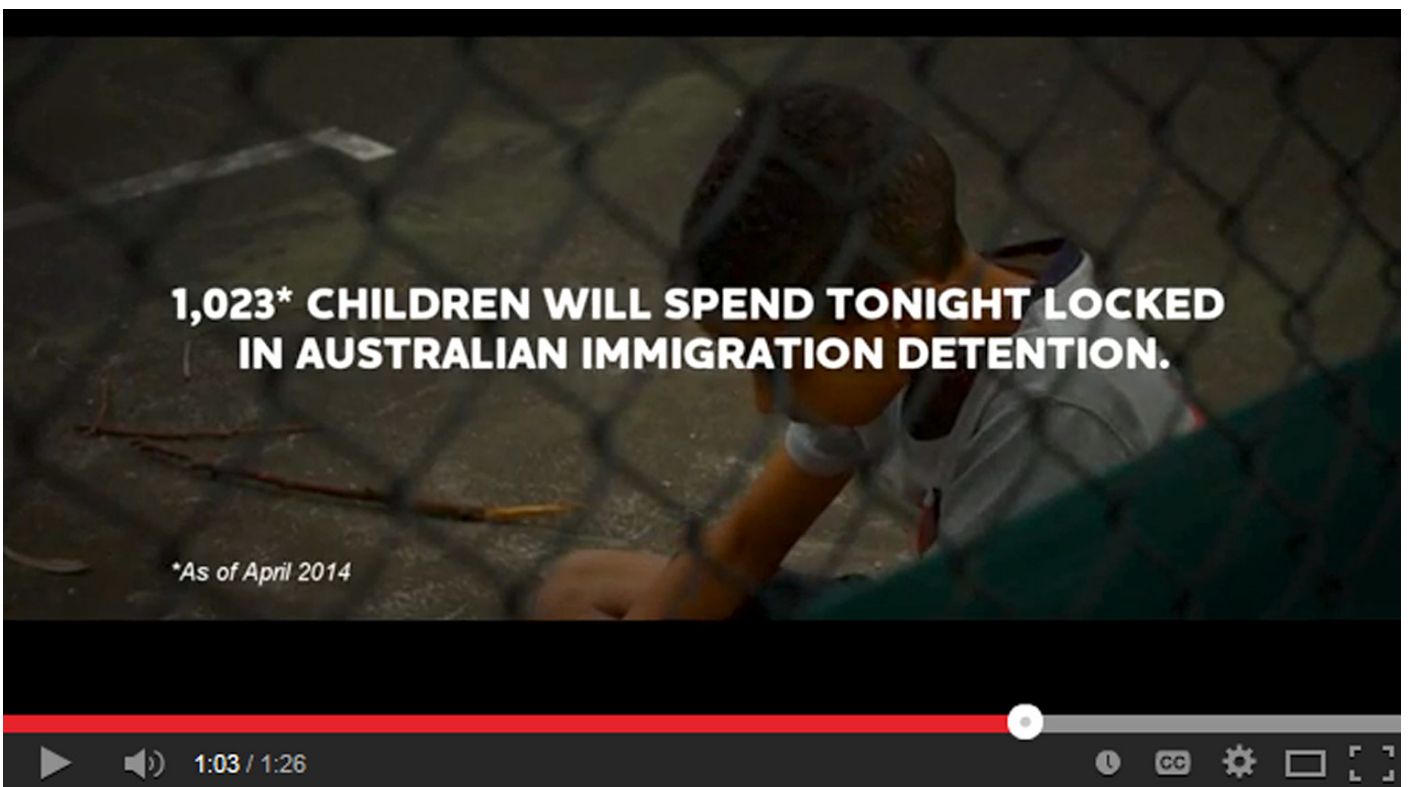


WHAT DOES THE BIG  
INSTALLATION LOOK  
LIKE? CAN WE HAVE  
IT TOO?

## The answer is YES!

After its 5 days in Sydney we'd love the beautiful installation to travel the country spreading the message that children don't belong in detention.

The main installation is designed by Benjamin Gilbert, a Sculpture by the Sea award winning artist. It is 5m x 2.5m x 2m and fits on standard car trailer. It needs 4-6 people to lift on/off and is self weighted to meet all Council requirements. The installation will travel with four A frame sandwich boards, printed materials and items to set up the child-friendly space to put the 'freed' dolls in. For more info or to check availability, **please contact Jenny at [jcollins-white@catholicmission.org.au](mailto:jcollins-white@catholicmission.org.au)**



# VIDEO PROMO

This promo video compliments the #FreeTheChildren action, and is perfect to share on social media while undertaking the action in your community. All the children in this video are actors whose guardians have given their permission to participate in this campaign.

The video is available at <http://endchilddetentionoz.com/materials/>

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## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

You do not need to be a refugee expert to run this action. The simple message is that children do not belong in detention. These FAQs will give you a few simple answers to some of the more common questions people may ask you. Remember, you don't need to enter a long debate with people, refugee policy is complex but treating children humanely and affording them their rights is a simple concept. If you need more info, check our website, get in touch with us and do not hesitate to refer people to us.

### HOW MANY CHILDREN ARE IN AUSTRALIAN DETENTION FACILITIES?

Today there are 1,023\* children indefinitely locked up in our immigration detention facilities.

### WHERE ARE THEY?

190\* children are detained in the small island nation of Nauru and 254\* are detained on Christmas Island. Our Government says these children will never be settled in Australia and will live in the tiny Island nation of Nauru forever (population 10,000) if they cannot be returned to the places from which they fled. Another 600\*+ children are detained in Darwin, Melbourne, Sydney, Adelaide, Brisbane and Perth.

### WHAT ABOUT BABIES?

Children are born into immigration detention. Today approximately 100\* babies (0-12mths) are locked up and around 80\* expectant mothers are detained. Babies are born on the Australian mainland as the health risks to mother and baby on Christmas Island and Nauru are deemed too high. Once a baby is 28 days old it can be sent back to Christmas Is. No babies have yet been sent to Nauru, but there is nothing to stop this happening.

### WHAT ABOUT CHILDREN WHO ARE WITHOUT THEIR PARENTS?

The guardian for any unaccompanied child is the Immigration Minister, the very person who decides on their detention. The Minister has so far sent 40\* unaccompanied children to detention on Nauru, handing over responsibility to the Nauruan Justice Minister. Transparency, healthcare and education are all lacking – we do not know nearly enough about the welfare of these children.

### HOW LONG ARE CHILDREN LOCKED UP FOR?

Australia locks up children indefinitely, mainly in very remote locations. They are not told when they are getting out ever, or if they will ever be settled in a safe place.

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A child detained in one of Australia's immigration detention facilities. Source: [chilout.org](http://chilout.org)

## WHAT ARE THE CONDITIONS LIKE IN DETENTION?

Children detained on Christmas Is and Nauru don't have access to school, very little recreation and limited healthcare.

Children detained in Australia can attend local primary and high schools, they are taken by bus, cannot play after school, cannot go to friend's birthday parties. No detention facility in Australia can be classified as child-friendly. Children in detention often tell us "even a golden cage is still a cage".

The Government has recently announced the closure of some detention facilities in Australia, these included the lower security ones, children are being moved into more prison-like facilities.

Darwin holds the most children, rooms are converted shipping containers, fences are 20m high. A 'toy-room' is in a shipping container and only open limited hours. There is a library, internet and some recreation. On the whole, the longer people are held in these places, the less engaged they become. Meals are in a common dining room, people are marked off rolls using their boat ID number. Parents cannot prepare meals for their children, people are allocated 2 sets of clothes each (even children).

## WHAT EFFECT DOES DETENTION HAVE?

Detention damages health, wellbeing, and development. It ruins childhoods and families. It particularly affects mental health; psychologists in detention centres in the past have diagnosed every child with some form of mental illness from PTSD to anxiety and depression.

## ISN'T IT ILLEGAL TO COME HERE BY BOAT? THAT'S WHY THEY'RE LOCKED UP?

Simply, no. Not by International or Australian law.

Australia has signed the Refugee Convention which defines who is a refugee and outlines the rights of refugees and the legal obligations of states towards refugees and asylum seekers.

# #FREE THE CHILDREN

One of those obligations is recognising that refugees have a lawful right to enter a country for the purposes of seeking asylum, regardless of how they arrive or whether they hold valid travel or identity documents.

This means that it is incorrect to refer to asylum seekers who arrive without authorisation as “illegal”, as they in fact have a lawful right to do so if they are seeking asylum.

## HOW MUCH DOES IT COST?

Offshore detention costs more than \$400,000 per person per year. Community detention (where an asylum seeker lives in a designated house in Australia with assistance) costs \$100,000 p/person annually. The cost of having someone on a Bridging Visa (out of detention, able to live anywhere) is \$50,000 p/person annually – but these people presently have no rights to work or study, if they did, the cost to taxpayers could reduce and in fact be in the positive as asylum seekers could pay taxes.

## WHAT ALTERNATIVES ARE THERE?

Community detention (CD) exists today. It involves trained case managers, assistance with housing, logistics, the asylum seeker still reports to the Department of Immigration. There are no restrictions on movement, the houses available are dependent on service providers (contracted by Commonwealth). This alternative is one quarter of the price of long-term detention (and could be made cheaper if asylum seekers were able to work). People in CD are less likely to suffer depression, mental illness and self-harm.

Worldwide, alternatives to detention are being developed that allow children to stay in the community with their families, while their migration status is being determined. Countries such as Belgium and Sweden have housing models, where families can stay together in a shelter in the community while waiting for the process. Other countries, such as Malaysia and Indonesia, use documentation issued by an authority that allows children and their families to live in the community while awaiting an outcome.

**A more detailed version of these FAQs and relevant international laws is available at [www.endchilddetentionoz.com/materials/](http://www.endchilddetentionoz.com/materials/)**

**To find out more go to [www.chilout.org](http://www.chilout.org)**



A child detained in one of Australia's immigration detention facilities. Source: chilout.org

# #FREE THE CHILDREN

## TEMPLATE PRESS RELEASE

Here's a sample release, please replace the grey highlighted text with information appropriate to your action, edit as you wish This release can be downloaded as a word document from [www.endchilddetentionoz.com/materials/](http://www.endchilddetentionoz.com/materials/)

If you are asked any in depth policy q's etc you can direct journalists to Sophie Peer, Campaign Coordinator, ChilOut 0412 575 012 (if you do this, please let Sophie know about your event either by phone or [team@chilout.org](mailto:team@chilout.org).)

### DATE

Press release for immediate use

Insert name of your town / suburb / school **SAYS "FREE THE CHILDREN"**

**\*\*name of your org** / town etc is proud to be part of a national campaign calling for an end to the detention of asylum seeker children. Our event is one of hundreds around the nation supporting the basic rights of children.

For **\*\* days at \*\*** insert exact location, we are hosting an installation to represent the 1,023\* children locked in Australia's immigration detention facilities today. We are asking members of the public to come down, symbolically free a child and then sign an action card letting our local MP, **\*INSERT YOUR MPs NAME\*** and Immigration Minister, Scott Morrison know that they support a child's right to freedom.

This campaign has been coordinated by the Australian Coalition to End Child Detention\*, a group of national and international agencies focused on alternatives to locking up children.

NB change quote to reflect **YOUR spokesperson "name of your org . school or I** is hosting this social action because we feel very strongly that no child should be indefinitely detained. These kids are no different to the kids of **name your school / town / suburb/ Australia**. We know that many people in our community want to take positive action for asylum seekers and this is one way to do so" states **person's name**

Children in detention on Nauru and Christmas Island do not have adequate education or healthcare. Being locked up indefinitely anywhere damages mental health, effects a child's development and their overall wellbeing. No other nation treats asylum seeker and refugee children in this way.

<http://endchilddetentionoz.com>

### USEFUL INFO

Latest detention statistics

More information [www.chilout.org](http://www.chilout.org)

**CONTACT :** **\*\*** need name and ideally mobile number of spokesperson or someone happy to field calls, answer journalists q's about your local event and put them in touch with spokesperson.

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## TEMPLATE LETTER TO LOCAL POLITICIANS/ COUNCILORS CELEBRITIES

This invitation can be downloaded as a word document from  
[www.endchilddetentionoz.com/materials/](http://www.endchilddetentionoz.com/materials/)

INSERT DATE

INSERT CONTACT INFORMATION OF LOCAL COORDINATOR OR SPOKESPERSON

Dear INSERT LOCAL MPS/ COUNCILLOR,

We are a group of INSERT NUMBER OF PEOPLE from INSERT GROUP NAME/S in your local area of INSERT LOCAL AREA.

Firstly, thank you for your work on INSERT ANY PREVIOUS ACTION ON RELEVANT ISSUES (REFUGEES/ HUMAN RIGHTS/ CHILDREN/ MENTAL HEALTH)

Our group is taking action to support the rights of the 1023\* children currently locked up in Australian immigration detention facilities. Psychologists have assessed these environments as "Mental illness factories," they are no place for children. Our position is all about a child's fundamental rights to freedom, to play, to education and to good healthcare.

You may have seen the Free the Children action held in the Sydney CBD at the start of June. On the INSERT DATES we will be holding a "Free the Children" action at INSERT PLACE. Similar actions are taking place nation wide.

The action involves a representation of the indefinite immigration detention of 1,023 \* children. This is not just a passive statement, but an interactive social action where people can 'free a child'. Dolls wearing numbered ID tags represent the detained children. Once a doll is freed, their ID tag is removed, the person taking action will keep half of this card as a reminder of their positive action and the other half will be signed on the spot as a card to local politicians imploring action for the protection of children.

We invite you to be the first in our community to free a child. Your involvement would take no more than 30minutes from \*\*am on \*\*th \*\* be specific about time

Thankyou for taking the time to consider our invitation, we hope to see you there.  
Please do not hesitate to contact us with any queries.

Yours Sincerely;



# #FREE THE CHILDREN

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## VOLUNTEER COORDINATION

For the Sydney installation, we had so many volunteers that we had to organise a volunteer form (with all their contact details and availability) and a roster which indicated who would be on staff when.

We always had a “group coordinator” volunteer on who had the most knowledge about the issue and was responsible for helping coordinate volunteers on their shift.

The volunteer form and roster are available at: <http://endchilddetentionoz.com/materials/>

If you have any questions about working with volunteers, get in touch with Sophie Peer by email: [team@chilout.org](mailto:team@chilout.org)



# # FREE THE CHILDREN

## Who are the ACEIDC?

We are the Australian Coalition to End Immigration Detention of Children. A coalition made up of several different organisations working to ensure Australia stops the immigration detention of children.

You can find out more about who we are, and our past actions here:

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AUSTRALIAN  
COALITION TO  
**END**  
IMMIGRATION  
DETENTION  
OF CHILDREN