

“FREE THE CHILDREN” INSTALLATION GUIDE

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL AUSTRALIA TOWNSVILLE GROUP



Installation at Townsville Cultural Fest August 13 -19 2014, by night and day.

What is it about?

This is a creative way to draw attention to the many refugees and asylum seekers being locked up in our immigration detention facilities. It is a protest especially against the detention of children.

Where does it come from?

The idea comes from a group called ChilOut who first created a similar installation in Sydney. In that event, members of the public were invited to walk in and symbolically liberate individual dolls. This one, created by the Townsville group of Amnesty Australia, is designed to work with a closed cage.

Contacts:

Facebook: [facebook.com/
AmnestyInternationalTownsville](https://www.facebook.com/AmnestyInternationalTownsville)

Website: amnesty.org.au/refugees

Twitter: @AmnestyTSV

ChilOut: www.chilout.org

Amesty Townsville Group

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What does it consist of?

- A wire cage
- As many dolls as we could gather (about 80)
- Individual ID numbers for the dolls tied or attached with safety-pins
- Explanatory A-frame A3 sign for top of cage
- Attached clear boxes with plenty of postcards to sign
- A small table and chair for people to write
- Pens attached to cage &/or table
- A mail box to collect the signed cards (locked)
- A gazebo/marquee for shelter (outdoors)
- 4 vinyl banners to attach to gazebo (or wall) with ties or adhesive velcro
- Laminated A4 signs to reinforce the message
- Lengths of bunting to use anywhere
- A plastic box to keep spare cards, information sheets, keys, tape, cable-ties, scissors, spare ID tags and safety pins etc.



Steps in the Process:

- Decide whether yours will be a stand-alone installation or interactive with cards to be signed. Read the ChilOut DIY kit as well as this. Consider security and staffing implications of the alternatives.
- Find a group to do the action, a place or event to host the installation, and set a date.
- Create the wire cage, collect dolls, get signs printed and gather other equipment. Note our signs were all printed on a good quality standard printer.
- Get postcards printed commercially (allow a week for this) or have some of ours.
- Make sure you have a way of transporting it all -- we used an average domestic trailer but it could possibly have been put on a roof-rack.
- Prepare a local media release and letter to politicians and decide how to use them.
- Set up on site with plenty of time to do it well. You will need plenty of cable-ties, adhesive velcro, cord, sticky-tape.
- Install a good light if it is a night event.
- If there are volunteers ensure that a roster is circulated and they are well prepared (FAQ and Volunteer Guide).
- After the event dismantle it all and find a suitable place to store it till next time. If this is the last, find a deserving recipient for the dolls (eg refugee children?).
- Sort the signed cards by Postcode. (We first collected the email addresses and sent out a message inviting people to join our local network to stay in touch.)
- Arrange for cards to be sent or delivered to the relevant Federal Members of Parliament, or to the Minister for Immigration, with a covering letter.
- Alternately a well-organised public handover could be beneficial, with a photographer and the media well-briefed by a press release.
- Write a report for your organisation, sponsors, ChilOut and whoever needs to know.

Evaluation of our first display:

- This strategy works!
- Displaying caged dolls was very effective to draw attention to the issue and people approached the stall because it was non-threatening.
- The issue is straightforward -- most people who stopped were willing to discuss the issue and sign the postcard.
- The simple, practical strategy was a good way to involve members, including new and young members in various different tasks.
- The display was part of a significant community event which drew thousands of people.
- The site was provided cost-free by the organisers of the festival and preparation was not very costly.
- The display was able to stand alone (although preferably staffed) which reduced the pressure to have many volunteers.
- The setup may later be used in a range of locations and events in the surrounding regions, and may be easily sent to other action groups.
- The 3-metre gazebo/marquee saved the display from heavy rain and would be necessary for overnight shelter from dew.
- To deliver the signed cards, careful planning is needed to achieve the greatest benefit. Meeting with an unsympathetic MP may distract from the value of the cards. Perhaps better to send them by mail (and meet the MP another time).
- Note some postcodes are in two electorates, so local knowledge will help -- you might ask people to name their electorate if that applies.
- As with all political actions, the more public attention the better, and to achieve this, more effort must be put into media releases, letters and invitations.
- Note the need to clarify in the material that the incarceration in detention centres refers to asylum seekers rather than youth offenders.

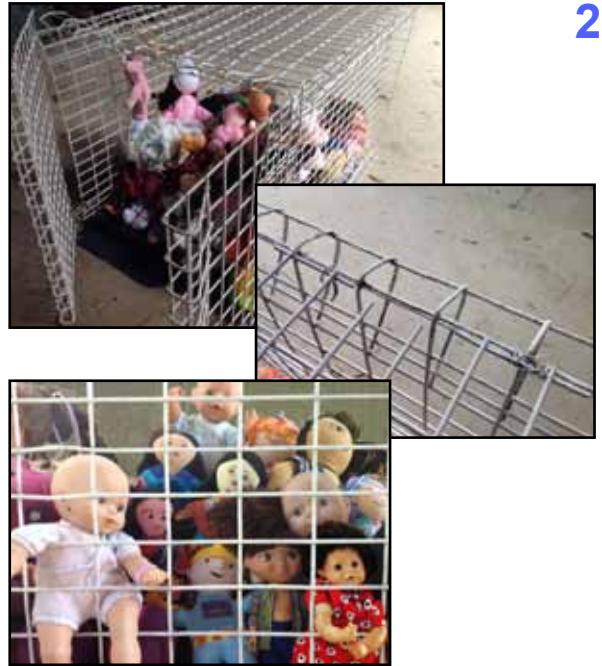
Preparation

1



Collection of dolls from various sources
 -- local opportunity shops (\$2 - \$5 each)
 -- Siham handcrafts (Fair Trade importers)
 -- donations from members and friends
 (dolls to be donated to refugee children)

2



The cage -- ours made from sections of rigid fencing found at the local tip shop, joined with wire twists (or cable ties), painted white.

Other design available from ChilOut.

3



Put a laminated ID tag on each doll (we used safety pins). See "child detainees" document.

Arrange the dolls and check the arrangement daily. Keep faces close to the wire and arms reaching out through mesh.

A box in the middle will help to make them all stand up and be visible.

CHILD DETAINEE #0001	CHILD DETAINEE #0021
CHILD DETAINEE #0002	CHILD DETAINEE #0022
CHILD DETAINEE #0003	CHILD DETAINEE #0023
CHILD DETAINEE #0004	CHILD DETAINEE #0024
CHILD DETAINEE #0005	CHILD DETAINEE #0025
CHILD DETAINEE #0006	CHILD DETAINEE #0026
CHILD DETAINEE #0007	CHILD DETAINEE #0027
CHILD DETAINEE #0008	CHILD DETAINEE #0028
CHILD DETAINEE #0009	CHILD DETAINEE #0029
CHILD DETAINEE #0010	CHILD DETAINEE #0030
CHILD DETAINEE #0011	CHILD DETAINEE #0031
CHILD DETAINEE #0012	CHILD DETAINEE #0032
CHILD DETAINEE #0013	CHILD DETAINEE #0033
CHILD DETAINEE #0014	CHILD DETAINEE #0034
CHILD DETAINEE #0015	CHILD DETAINEE #0035
CHILD DETAINEE #0016	CHILD DETAINEE #0036
CHILD DETAINEE #0017	CHILD DETAINEE #0037
CHILD DETAINEE #0018	CHILD DETAINEE #0038
CHILD DETAINEE #0019	CHILD DETAINEE #0039
CHILD DETAINEE #0020	CHILD DETAINEE #0040

"child detainees"

4



Gather a team of helpers, practise first and try out the hardware if possible.

Make sure volunteers know what to do and what to say (see guide).

Be prepared for opposing viewpoints (see FAQ).

5

Sign on the cage --make it clear and self-explanatory, but be careful it doesn't obscure view of the dolls



The letter box is attached with cable ties and is kept padlocked.

Unused cards are in a rack on the side of the cage.

A pen (tied down) and a clip-board is offered for signing cards. A small table close by will enable you to keep distracting papers off the top of the cage.

Postcard to sign we had 1000 printed on 200 gsm card



FREE THE CHILDREN

To my Federal Member of Parliament,

Today I ask you, and the Parliament in which you serve, to take action to support the rights of children. I implore you to end the indefinite, remote and mandatory detention of children seeking Australia's protection.

Australia's remote and offshore detention facilities are dangerous places to lock up children. The mental health damage alone will be catastrophic. There are alternatives to detention which are proven to work, are cheaper and respect human rights.

I want Australia to uphold its duties to all children equally. I want my government to ensure that children are not denied their liberty and their rights. Detention robs children of their childhood, it does not save lives.

Yours sincerely,

Name Signature

Postcode Email Date

Comment Tick if under 18

Main A2 sign,

mounted on corflute -- cable-tied to the cage as an A-frame -- this is the main sign -- but should not obscure the contents of the cage

Each of these dolls represents a child kept in a detention facility, put there by our Government.

There are hundreds of children locked up by Australia today.

We believe all children have the right to freedom, to education, to healthcare and to play.

If you agree, sign a card to tell the government what you think.

Leave it in the post-box, and the card will be delivered to your Federal Member of Parliament.



**FREE
THE CHILDREN**

TODAY THERE ARE AT LEAST 892 CHILDREN LOCKED IN IMMIGRATION DETENTION.

Our government says these children will not be resettled in Australia, ever.

Children who arrive without parents are locked up. Their guardian is their detainer, the Immigration Minister.

The children locked on Nauru and Christmas Island do not attend a proper school and have limited healthcare*.

There are over 80 pregnant women and 45 newborns detained today*. Maternal and infant healthcare is not to Australian community standards.

Detention robs children of their childhood; detention damages families.

TAKE ACTION.

GET INVOLVED.

Stand up against this abuse of children; stand up for a child's right to freedom.

There are humane, cheaper alternatives. Find out more www.chilout.org

* as of 30 April 2014



**FREE
THE CHILDREN**

Supplementary A4 signs

laminated (matte lamination is easier to read)
with corner holes to tie to gazebo
or use sticky velcro



Asylum seekers are people looking for a safe country to live in because they are frightened in their own homes.

Refugees are people who are outside their own country and, because of who they are, have a recognised reason to fear persecution if they go back there.

Contact:

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Peter Hanley amnestytownsville@gmail.com

Amnesty International Australia Townsville Group

Monthly letter-writing meeting 6.00 pm, first Wednesday each month followed by a meal, at Thai International Restaurant, 235 Flinders Street, Townsville

To join the email list --
amnestytownsville@gmail.com (Peter)
www.facebook.com/AmnestyInternationalTownsville
twitter: @amnestyTSV
mobile 0401 550 695 (Jenny)
mobile 0407 703 843 (Sue)

If you sign a card to tell the government what you think, leave it in this post-box. The card will be delivered to your Federal Member of Parliament. Include your postcode or suburb or electorate.

TOWNSVILLE GROUP
AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL
AUSTRALIA

sign beside post-box

create your own local information poster

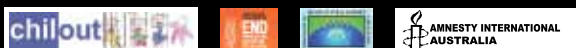


Banners

We had two of each, printed on vinyl, 1500 x 500 mm (could be on corflute).
Attach to gazebo or walls with cord, cable ties or adhesive velcro.



× ————— ×
FREE
× ————— ×
THE CHILDREN



TAKE ACTION



sign
here



AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL
AUSTRALIA

GUIDE FOR VOLUNTEERS

What is the installation about?

This is a creative way to draw attention to the many refugees and asylum seekers being locked up in our immigration detention facilities. It is a protest especially against the detention of children.

Where does it come from?

The idea comes from a group called ChilOut who first created a similar installation in Sydney. In that event, members of the public were invited to walk in and symbolically liberate individual dolls. This one, created by the Townsville group of Amnesty Australia, is designed to work with a closed cage.

What does it consist of?

A wire cage in which are held as many dolls as we could gather (currently about 80) has an explanatory A-frame A3 sign tied to the top. Attached clear boxes hold postcards to be signed by people who wish, using pens attached. There is a mail box to collect the signed cards, with a padlock.

Laminated A4 signs arranged around the gazebo provide extra information. A table and chairs allow people to talk and write without using the cage as a table (thereby detracting from its visual effect).

A plastic box holds spare cards, information sheets, keys, tape, cable-ties, scissors, spare ID tags and safety pins etc.

What is expected of volunteers?

The idea is for the installation to be self-explanatory. However people don't always take in what they see at first glance. The volunteer can make people feel welcome and tell them about the meaning of the cage and dolls. Prompt people to sign cards and post them.

When people want to argue or discuss issues, they may be offered the FAQ sheet (Frequently Asked Questions). Enthusiasts may be invited to join the local activist group by leaving their name and email contact.

Don't attach any other signs to the cage. Be careful to avoid leaving papers and objects on top, as that will obstruct views and distract from vital information. When people approach, step forward and offer them the chance to sign.

When installation is not staffed:

When leaving the cage unattended, ensure that writing materials are on the table close by the cage, and a chair to sit on. Cage and postbox is left locked.

What will happen to the cards?

The action group will sort and send them to the relevant Member of Federal Parliament -- that is why a postcode is requested. Before sending them, we will collect the email addresses and offer signatories the opportunity to stay involved. Those who say no will be removed.

May children sign the cards?

Yes there is no reason why children should not express their opinion to a member of parliament. However we have included a box to tick for under-18s.

Safety and security:

There is a combination lock to secure the cage, and a padlock to secure the postbox so the installation can be left unattended.

The gazebo will be pegged down, but if the wind is strong there are tent-ropes too. If these are used, lengths of bunting can be attached, to prevent people tripping over the ropes.

Start and end of each day:

Some items including loose papers will be packed away over-night, in the plastic box. Postcards to be collected if the postbox is full, and the card-holder replenished. Gazebo walls may need to be tied around the whole. Dolls need to be checked that they are upright and where possible thrusting their hands out through the cage.

Extra information:

There is some reading matter on the table for volunteers to read in quiet moments.

Contacts:

(local names and numbers)

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (FAQ)

How many children are in Australian detention facilities?

Today there are 1,023 children indefinitely locked up in our immigration detention facilities. (these numbers are April 2014)

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.

The UN Convention on Rights of Child Article 27 states:

States recognize the right of every child to a standard of living adequate for the child's physical, mental, spiritual, moral and social development.

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.

The UN Convention on Rights of Child Articles 28 and 31 states:

1. States recognize the right of the child to education... they shall, in particular:
 - (a) Make primary education compulsory and available free to all;
 - (b) Encourage the development of different forms of secondary education...
2. States recognize the right of the child to rest and leisure, to engage in play and recreational activities appropriate to the age of the child and to participate freely in cultural life and the arts.

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).

FAQ continued

What effect does detention have?

Detention damages health, wellbeing, 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.

The UN Convention on Rights of Child Article 24 states:

States recognize the right of the child to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of health and to facilities for the treatment of illness and rehabilitation of health. States Parties shall strive to ensure that no child is deprived of his or her right of access to such health care services

Isn't it illegal to come here by boat? That's why they're locked up?

Simply, no. Not by International or Australian law.

The United Nations Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees (commonly known as the Refugee Convention) is the primary international legal document relating to refugee protection. It defines who is a refugee and outlines the rights of refugees and the legal obligations of states towards refugees and asylum seekers. Australia has signed this.

This Article recognises 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. As such, what otherwise be considered illegal actions (eg. entering a country without a visa) should not be treated as such if a person is seeking asylum.

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, not rent assisted etc) 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.

To find out more go to www.chilout.org

These images are available from ChiOut

-- could be used as posters

