

Children Out of Detention
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Aussie Kids 'ChilOut' with Minister Vanstone

Eight teenage Ambassadors for ChilOut will visit Parliament House on Thursday 11 March to ask politicians to release all children from immigration detention.

"The friends of mine in detention are so lovely," said 15-year-old Port Augusta ChilOut Ambassador Bonne.

"They have taught me so much that I would not have known through school or at home. Does that not mean they can help Australia learn and grow?"

The young people come from places as diverse as Wagga Wagga, NSW, to Ulverstone, Tasmania. Three of them are refugees from Afghanistan, and two are former detainees.

The ChilOut Ambassadors will have breakfast with the Minister for Immigration, Senator Amanda Vanstone, and then meet the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs, Larry Anthony MP as well as the shadow ministers, Stephen Smith MP and Senator Jacinta Collins.

The Ambassadors will present signatures from over 5,000 Australian children - calling for a permanent end to the detention of children and their families - to Senator Andrew Bartlett and Tanya Plibersek MP, who will table the petition in Parliament.

"Children don't deserve to be locked up in poor conditions," said Joan, a 17-year-old Tasmanian ChilOut Ambassador.

"They deserve to live in an environment that will provide them opportunities to live a normal happy childhood."

"I find it extremely distressing imagining what those children must experience, because these things will affect them for the rest of their lives," said 15-year-old Fabienne from Sydney's north shore, who plans to ask Minister Vanstone, "why she believes imprisoning innocent people indefinitely is necessary, and whether she has actively explored alternatives to mandatory detention, as requested by the United Nations".

The ChilOut Ambassadors are also addressing the Human Rights Sub-Committee and will meet Senator Linda Kirk.

DIARY NOTE:

At 1pm, the ChilOut Ambassadors will be available to answer questions in Committee Room 2R1.

CONTACT: Dianne Hiles, 0425 244 667 or Jessica Perini, 0410 507 137.

ChilOut (Children Out Of Detention) is a group of parents and citizens opposed to the mandatory detention of children in Australian immigration detention centres.

There are more than 150 children in immigration detention today.