

## Children in Detention – The Numbers



- **Thousands of children detained from 1999 – 2003**  
A total of 976 children were in immigration detention in 1999-2000; 1,923 children in 2000-2001; 1,696 children in 2001-2002 and 703 children in 2002-2003. Most of these children arrived by boat. These figures do not include children transferred to and detained on Nauru and Manus Island (Papua New Guinea).
- **Over 2000 were asylum seekers**  
Between 1 July 1999 and 30 June 2003, 2,184 of the above detainee children sought political asylum, i.e. they applied for refugee status.
- **They were all detained in remote camps**  
All of the 2184 children were held in high security immigration detention centres while their refugee status was being determined.
- **More than 90% were found to be refugees and released**  
More than 92% of these children were found to be refugees and were granted a temporary protection visa. For some nationalities the success rate was even higher (98% Iraqi; 95% Afghan).
- **842 children imprisoned at peak – almost 500 at Woomera**  
The highest number of children in detention at any one time between 1 January 1999 and 1 January 2004 was 842 (on 1 September 2001). Of this number, 456 were at the Woomera detention centre.
- **Averaging 20 months in prison at end 2003**  
Since 1999, children have been detained for increasingly longer periods of time. By the beginning of 2003, the average detention period for a child in immigration detention was one year, three months and 17 days. As at 26 December 2003, the average length of detention had increased to one year, eight months and 11 days.
- **Almost 5 ½ years in prison for one child**  
The longest a child has ever been in immigration detention is five years, five months and 20 days. This child and his mother were released from Port Hedland detention centre on 12 May 2000, after eventually being assessed as refugees.
- **30 months on Nauru for children from Afghanistan and Iraq**  
In June 2004, all 74 detainee children on Nauru had been there for at least 30 months. All were Iraqi or Afghan.
- **Children are now in their 4th year of imprisonment**  
In June 2004, most children at Baxter and Port Augusta detention centres were in their fourth year of detention. Iranian families were in their 49th month of detention.
- **Infants have spent most or all of their lives as prisoners**  
Some infants (0-4 years) have spent substantial portions of their lives in immigration detention. On 30 June 2000 there were 164 infants in detention. Five of them had spent more than 18 months in detention. On 30 June 2001 there were 144 infants in detention. Two of these children had spent over two and a half years in detention - more than half of their lives.

These statistics are sourced from 'A last resort?' HREOC's Report of the National Inquiry into Children in Immigration Detention, and ChilOut members who visit detainees.