



***Australian Federation of Graduate Women Inc.***

**PO Box 90 Nedlands WA 6009**

**[www.afgw.org.au](http://www.afgw.org.au)**

Professor Gillian Triggs  
President  
Australian Human Rights Commission  
GPO Box 5218  
Sydney 2001

9<sup>th</sup> April 2014

Dear Professor Triggs,

I am writing to you on behalf of the Australian Federation of Graduate Women in relation to the 2014 Australian Human Rights Commission's National Inquiry into Children in Immigration Detention.

We commend you on initiating this inquiry and add our concern about the impact that prolonged detention is having on unaccompanied and accompanied children. In particular, we deplore the effect the current situation will have on these children's mental health. For example, none of the following life flourishers cited by the Black Dog Institute as criteria for wellbeing are proffered to detainees:

- Contributing to society
- Social integration
- Wide range of social groups
- Accepting others
- Self-acceptance
- Mastery over one's environment
- Positive relationships with others
- Autonomy
- Personal growth
- Purpose in life

We believe that current policy contradicts basic human rights in areas such as protection, detention, degradation and especially education.

Children in detention do not even have those three simple components so necessary for happiness: someone to care about, something to look forward to and something to do. Whilst happiness is not a right per se it would seem that every criterion for human wellbeing and mental health has been forfeited by denying these children access to community living. We applaud your efforts to bring Australia to a position where it can lead the world in supporting natural justice.

Please find attached AFGW advocacy of relevance to your inquiry.

Yours faithfully

Dr Madeleine Laming  
President, Australian Federation of Graduate Women  
and  
Caroline Jones  
Convenor of the AFGW Standing Committee on Peace, Human Rights and Human Security