

Australian Council of Human Rights Authorities

Media Release 24 November 2017: Human rights bodies call for protection of human rights on Manus Island

State and Territory members of the Australian Council of Human Rights Authorities (ACHRA) call on the Australian Government to ensure that the human rights of the men on Manus Island are protected.

The Commissioners from Victoria, Tasmania, Queensland, Western Australia, the Australian Capital Territory, South Australia and Northern Territory repeat the call of the Australian Human Rights Commissioner that the Australian Government must honour Australia's international human rights obligations as a matter of urgency and provide protection and support for these people.

Reports of the presence of authorities and forcible removal of people at the Manus Island facility is of urgent concern to the state and territory Commissioners. They strongly support the call of Australian Human Rights Commissioner Edward Santow for the Governments of Australia and Papua New Guinea to honour their international human rights obligations and avoid the use of force on Manus Island.

"Our approach should be one of protection and support," Commissioner Santow said yesterday.

"Using force against a vulnerable and traumatised group of people would not be an acceptable response.

"We know many of these people have complex physical and mental health needs."

Under international human rights law, the use of force must always be a last resort but especially in the case of vulnerable groups, Commissioner Santow said.

"Australian and PNG authorities must enter into a constructive dialogue with the men on Manus Island. This situation can and should be resolved in a way that protects their human rights."

The UN High Commissioner for Refugees has described the situation as a "humanitarian emergency".

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