

## Let the Biloela children be children: World Vision

**MEDIA RELEASE | For immediate release**

### **WORLD VISION AUSTRALIA**

**June 11, 2021** – World Vision Australia has called for the immediate removal of the Biloela Tamil family from Christmas Island to allow young girls, Tharunicaa and Kopika Murugappan, to enjoy the childhood that every child deserves.

Detained offshore on Christmas Island since August 2019, Tharunicaa, 3, and Kopika, 5, are the only children left in immigration detention in Australia. They have been kept there and in Melbourne for a total of almost 1000 days while their parents challenge attempts to deport them to Sri Lanka.

World Vision Australia CEO Daniel Wordsworth said it was grossly unfair for the children to be denied a normal childhood.

“It is clear that the indefinite detention of children of this age, separated from friends and peers and denied a normal, daily existence, would be causing real and serious harm to them,” Mr Wordsworth said.

“As a child-focused organisation, World Vision cannot stand by and watch these two very young girls pay the price of a dispute over their parents’ eligibility to remain in Australia. I am sure anyone who cares about the wellbeing of children would agree that holding two innocent children in offshore detention is a gross injustice.”

Mr Wordsworth appealed to authorities to show some compassion and let the family return to their home of Biloela while the merits of their case was decided.

“These girls – Australian-born girls – have been denied the chance to be with friends, access to education and the healthy normality of a conventional community. We know the early years are crucial in a child’s development, and these girls are being denied the opportunity to play, and have the stimulation and socialisation with peers that are so vital to children at this stage. They deserve better.

“We said it in 2018 during our [Kids off Nauru](#) campaign, and it rings true in the case of the Murugappan family in 2021 – offshore detention is inhumane, but especially so in the case of children. Locking up children is never the answer.”

Mr Wordsworth called for the situation to be resolved urgently in the best interests of the children’s welfare.

“The sooner these girls can experience a normal childhood environment and start to rebuild their lives, the better.”

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