**Member’s letter to HESTA**

Below is a sample letter that HESTA members can use to send to HESTA urging them to divest from the mandatory detention industry. Please use this letter in full or adapt it. A personalised letter will be taken more seriously, however you can use information in this letter to strengthen your own argument. Let us know the feedback/response you get!

Email your letter to: [hesta@hesta.com.au](mailto:hesta@hesta.com.au).

You can also post your letter to: PO Box 600, Carlton South VIC 3053.

Dear Ms. Blakey, CEO,

CC Cheryl Macnaught, General Manager of Client Relationship,

My name is \_\_\_\_and I am a HESTA member. I am writing to call upon HESTA to divest from the mandatory detention industry through the company Transfield Services. I am gravely concerned that my retirement savings, which are invested in HESTA, are contributing to profits raised from the imprisonment of asylum seekers in inhumane conditions, exposing them to further harm and danger.

HESTA is a large institutional shareholder in Transfield, with votes at the Annual General Meeting. At 27 February 2015, HESTA holds just under 5% of shares in Transfield Serviceswith over 23.5 million shares.[[1]](#footnote-1) This gives HESTA significant influence in Transfield beyond simply having investments. HESTA Board members have the capacity to have influence over governance and policy decisions by Transfield.

Even from a financial perspective, holding shares in Transfield seems imprudent. While HESTA’s stake in Transfield remains substantial, the decline in Transfield’s share value represents losses for HESTA members’ retirement savings. For example from December 2014 and January 2015 – when HESTA held more than 5% of the shares in Transfield – the value of its shares in Transfield declined from around $44.8 million to $39.5 million.[[2]](#footnote-2) There are investments with similar or higher rates of return that are available to the HESTA Board.

Even if Transfield were a highly performing company, there is no ethical basis on which to justify the use of HESTA members’ retirement savings to bolster the public-private partnership of the state and an industry which profits politically and financially from the human horror that is the mandatory detention system. The recent Human Rights Commission Inquiry into the 518 children in detention as well as the murder of Reza Berati and the death due to severe neglect of Hamid Kehazaei, both interned on Manus Island, are all testimony to the brutality of a system designed not to process applications for refugee status, but to punish and deter others from coming to Australia. Colleagues in our own industry have recently been threatened with criminal prosecution for blowing the whistle on the sexual abuse of children within these detention facilities.

Not only are the retirement savings of health and community services workers being hijacked by an industry that damages the health of people who are interned, it is also being used by HESTA to support companies who are determined to pursue the privatisation of health care and welfare.

As a member of HESTA, I am calling on you to cease investing my funds and those of my colleagues in the mandatory detention industry through your investments in Transfield Services, as well as any other investments in mandatory detention. Complete divestment is the only way of ensuring our funds are used ethically and securely. I am sure that you will take our concerns as members seriously and do the right thing.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely,

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1. http://asxcomnewspdfs.fairfaxmedia.com.au/2015/03/02/01604569-575220267.pdf [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Calculated from the value of Transfield shares between 11 December 2014 and 23 January 2015. See https://xborderoperationalmatters.wordpress.com/2015/01/23/hesta/ [↑](#footnote-ref-2)