Supplementary File

Table S1. PRISMA 2020 Checklist

Item	Section/topic	Item	Current status	Assessment against current manuscript	Current manuscript location
1	TITLE	Identify the report as a systematic review.	Reported	The manuscript identifies the work as a systematic review in the Methods.	Title; Section 2.1
2	ABSTRACT	See the PRISMA 2020 for Abstracts checklist.	Reported	A structured abstract should explicitly report the objective, eligibility criteria, information sources, risk-of-bias methods, synthesis methods, included studies, main results, limitations, conclusions, registration.	Abstract
3	INTRODUCTION — Rationale	Describe the rationale for the review in the context of existing knowledge.	Reported	The Introduction explains the Australian policy context, prior evidence, gaps in Australian asylum-seeker evidence, and the need for a focused synthesis.	Sections 1.1–1.5
4	INTRODUCTION — Objectives	Provide an explicit statement of the objective(s) or question(s) the review addresses.	Reported	The review objectives and questions are explicitly stated.	Section 1.6; Section 2.2
5	METHODS — Eligibility criteria	Specify inclusion and exclusion criteria for the review and how studies were grouped for the syntheses.	Reported	PECO criteria, study designs, inclusion/exclusion criteria, population, exposure, comparator and outcomes are described. Grouping for synthesis is described in Section 2.10.	Sections 2.3–2.5; Section 2.10
6	METHODS — Information sources	Specify all databases, registers, websites, organisations, reference lists and other sources searched or consulted, and state the date when each was last searched.	Reported	PubMed/MEDLINE, PsycINFO and CINAHL are represented in the current PRISMA figure. Supplementary sources include grey literature and reference lists. The final search date was 31 March 2026. Specific grey-literature sources, search terms, dates and yields are reported.	Section 2.6; Figure 2, Supplementary Table S2 and S3
7	METHODS — Search strategy	Present the full search strategies for all databases, registers and websites, including filters and limits used.	Reported	The manuscript states that the full database-specific strategies for all three databases are provided in S2.	Section 2.6; Supplementary Table S2 and S3
8	METHODS — Selection process	Specify methods used to decide whether a study met inclusion criteria, including how many reviewers screened each record/report, whether they worked independently, and how disagreements were resolved.	Reported	Two independent reviewers screened titles/abstracts and full texts; disagreements were resolved by discussion or third-reviewer consultation.	Section 2.7
9	METHODS — Data collection process	Specify methods used to collect data from reports, including how many reviewers collected data, whether they worked	Reported	A standardised extraction form is described, and the current manuscript clearly state how many reviewers extracted data independently and how	Section 2.8

		independently, and how disagreements were resolved.		extraction disagreements were resolved.	
10	METHODS — Data items	List and define all outcomes for which data were sought, including definitions, and list and define other variables for which data were sought.	Reported	The manuscript identifies mental-health outcomes and extracted study characteristics, exposures, settings, instruments and findings. Outcomes are explicitly distinguished rather than treated as interchangeable.	Sections 2.3, 2.8
11	METHODS — Study risk of bias assessment	Specify methods used to assess risk of bias, including the tool(s), how many reviewers assessed each study, whether they worked independently, and how disagreements were resolved.	Reported	Assessment tools are identified; two reviewers independently assessed studies and resolved disagreements by discussion or third-reviewer consultation.	Section 2.9
12	METHODS — Effect measures	Specify for each outcome the effect measure(s) used in the synthesis.	Reported	Effect measures are stated for studies where such data was available.	Table 2
13	METHODS — Synthesis methods	Describe the processes used to decide which studies were eligible for each synthesis; prepare and present data; tabulate or visually display individual study results and syntheses; and synthesise results, including methods used to explore heterogeneity and software used, if applicable.	Reported	Narrative synthesis and thematic synthesis are described, and heterogeneity is explained. No meta-analysis or software is reported. Because no quantitative pooling was performed, statistical heterogeneity was not quantitatively assessed.	Section 2.10
14	METHODS — Reporting bias assessment	Describe any methods used to assess risk of bias due to missing results in a synthesis.	N/A	N/A	N/A
15	METHODS — Certainty assessment	Describe any methods used to assess certainty (or confidence) in the body of evidence for an outcome.	Not reported	GRADE or certainty assessment was not carried out due to heterogeneity of included studies.	Methods / Limitations
16	RESULTS — Study selection	Describe the results of the search and selection process, from the number of records identified through screening to the number of studies included, ideally using a flow diagram.	Reported	Current PRISMA figures shows study selection process.	Section 3.1; Figure 2
17	RESULTS — Study characteristics	Cite each included study and present its characteristics.	Reported	Table 2 presents author, design, sample, population, setting, exposure, outcomes and key findings for the included studies.	Section 3.1; Table 2
18	RESULTS — Risk of bias in studies	Present assessments of risk of bias for each included study.	N/A	N/A	N/A

19	RESULTS — Individual study results	For all outcomes, present, for each study, summary statistics for each group where appropriate and effect estimates and their precision where applicable.	N/A	N/A	N/A
20	RESULTS — Results of syntheses	For each synthesis, summarise the characteristics and risk of bias among contributing studies; present all results of statistical syntheses and their uncertainty; present results of investigations of heterogeneity; and present sensitivity analyses where undertaken.	Reported	The review appropriately states that no meta-analysis was conducted and uses narrative synthesis. The Results explicitly link each thematic synthesis to contributing studies and risk-of-bias considerations. Statistical heterogeneity and sensitivity analyses are not applicable/not performed.	Sections 2.10 and 3; Table 3
21	RESULTS — Reporting biases	Present assessments of risk of bias due to missing results for each synthesis.	Not reported	N/A	N/A
22	RESULTS — Certainty of evidence	Present assessments of certainty (or confidence) in the body of evidence for each outcome assessed.	Not reported	No formal certainty assessment is currently presented.	Results / Limitations
23a	DISCUSSION — Interpretation	Provide a general interpretation of the results in the context of other evidence.	Reported	The Discussion interprets findings in relation to detention, visa insecurity, social and structural conditions, psychological well-being, and broader literature.	Discussion
23b	DISCUSSION — Limitations of evidence	Discuss any limitations of the evidence included in the review.	Reported	The manuscript discusses heterogeneity, small/context-specific samples, administrative data limitations, population overlap, detention/community differences, policy changes and other evidence limitations.	Discussion; Limitations
23c	DISCUSSION — Limitations of review processes	Discuss any limitations of the review processes used.	Reported	The manuscript reports no prospective protocol registration and describes English-language restriction and heterogeneity, including lack of formal reporting-bias/certainty assessment if applicable.	Section 2.1; Discussion / Limitations
23d	DISCUSSION — Implications	Discuss implications of the results for practice, policy and future research.	Reported	Implications are discussed for immigration authorities, health services/clinicians, NGOs and community organisations, with attention to the limited evidence for intervention effectiveness.	Discussion; Implications
24a	OTHER INFORMATION — Registration and protocol	Provide registration information for the review, including register name and registration number, or state that the	Reported	The manuscript explicitly states that the protocol was not prospectively registered in PROSPERO, OSF or another public repository.	Section 2.1

		review was not registered.			
24b	OTHER INFORMATION — Protocol availability	Indicate where the review protocol can be accessed, or state that a protocol was not prepared.	Reported	The manuscript states that the protocol was not prospectively registered, therefore it is not available for access.	Section 2.1
25	OTHER INFORMATION — Support	Describe sources of financial or other support for the review, and the role of funders or sponsors.	Reported	The manuscript contains a declarations section, and states that no funding was received for this review.	Declarations
26	OTHER INFORMATION — Competing interests	Declare any competing interests of review authors.	Reported	A declarations section is included in the manuscript.	Declarations
27	OTHER INFORMATION — Availability of data, code and other materials	Report which of the following are publicly available and where: data forms, extracted data, analytic data, code, and other materials; or state that none are publicly available.	Reported	The current manuscript states that no data is publicly available.	Declarations

Table S2. Showing Database search strings and results.

Database	Search String	Search Date	Result
PubMed/MEDLINE	(“Refugees”[Mesh] OR “Emigrants and Immigrants”[Mesh] OR asylum seeker*[tiab] OR asylum-seeker*[tiab] OR refugee*[tiab]) AND (“Mental Health”[Mesh] OR “Mental Disorders”[Mesh] OR “Stress, Psychological”[Mesh] OR “Depressive Disorder”[Mesh] OR “Anxiety Disorders”[Mesh] OR “Stress Disorders, Post-Traumatic”[Mesh] OR “Self-Injurious Behavior”[Mesh] OR mental health[tiab] OR psychological distress[tiab] OR depression[tiab] OR anxiety[tiab] OR “post-traumatic stress disorder”[tiab] OR PTSD[tiab] OR self-harm[tiab] OR self harm[tiab] OR suicidal*[tiab]) AND (“Refugees”[Mesh] OR “Emigration and Immigration”[Mesh]	Initial search: 15/03/2026; Final search: 31/03/2026	243 Records received

	OR “Prisons”[Mesh] OR immigration detention[tiab] OR immigration detention cent*[tiab] OR detention[tiab] OR visa insecurity[tiab] OR visa uncertainty[tiab] OR immigration status[tiab] OR legal insecurity[tiab] OR asylum uncertainty[tiab]) AND (“Australia”[Mesh] OR Australia[tiab] OR Australian[tiab])		
PsychInfo	(DE "Asylum Seekers" OR DE "Refugees" OR TI(asylum seeker* OR asylum-seeker*) OR AB(asylum seeker* OR asylum-seeker*)) AND (DE "Mental Health" OR DE "Psychological Distress" OR DE "Depression" OR DE "Anxiety" OR DE "Posttraumatic Stress Disorder" OR DE "Self-Injurious Behavior" OR TI("mental health" OR "psychological distress" OR depression OR anxiety OR "post-traumatic stress disorder" OR PTSD OR self-harm OR "self harm") OR AB("mental health" OR "psychological distress" OR depression OR anxiety OR "post-traumatic stress disorder" OR PTSD OR self-harm OR "self harm")	Initial search: 15/03/2026; Final search: 31/03/2026	1558 Records received
CINAHL	(MH "Refugees" OR MH "Asylum Seekers" OR TI (asylum seeker* OR asylum-seeker*) OR AB (asylum seeker* OR asylum-seeker*)) AND (MH "Mental Health" OR MH "Psychological Distress" OR MH "Depression" OR MH "Anxiety" OR MH "Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder" OR MH "Self-Injurious Behavior" OR TI ("mental health" OR "psychological distress" OR depression OR anxiety OR "post-traumatic stress disorder" OR PTSD OR self-harm OR "self harm") OR AB ("mental health" OR "psychological distress" OR	Initial search: 15/03/2026; Final search: 31/03/2026	321 records received

	depression OR anxiety OR "post-traumatic stress disorder" OR PTSD OR self-harm OR "self harm")) AND (TI ("immigration detention" OR "immigration detention centre*" OR detention OR "visa insecurity" OR "visa uncertainty" OR "immigration status" OR "legal insecurity" OR "asylum uncertainty") OR AB ("immigration detention" OR "immigration detention centre*" OR detention OR "visa insecurity" OR "visa uncertainty" OR "immigration status" OR "legal insecurity" OR "asylum uncertainty")) AND (TI (Australia OR Australian) OR AB (Australia OR Australian))		

Table S3. Showing Grey-literature and reference-list searches

Source	**Website/repository searched**	**Search terms used**	**Search date**	**Records identified**
Australian Human Rights Commission	AHRC website	"asylum seekers" AND "mental health"; "immigration detention" AND "mental health"; "asylum seekers" AND self-harm	31 March 2026	2
Australian Government/Department of Home Affairs	Home Affairs website/repository	"asylum seekers" AND "mental health"; "immigration detention" AND "mental health"; "asylum seekers" AND health	31 March 2026	17
United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)	UNHCR Australia website	"Australia" AND "asylum seekers" AND "mental health"; "Australia" AND "asylum seekers" AND detention; "Australia" AND refugees AND health	31 March 2026	5
Reference lists of included studies	Reference lists of included studies	Reference-list screening of all included studies for additional eligible evidence	31 March 2026	4
Total				28

Table S4. Domain-Level Assessment

Author(s) & Year	Study Design	Appraisal Tool	Methodological Domain	Domain-Level judgement	Study-specific rationale
Hedrick et al. (2020)	Content analysis of incident reports	JBI Cross-sectional	Study design and outcome definition	Strength	Aim, design and outcome are well matched: content analysis of all FOI-released incident reports, with self-harm defined as any intentional self-injury or self-poisoning irrespective of suicidal intent.
			Participant/event selection and measurement	Some concerns	Analysis covered all FOI-released self-harm incident reports (Aug 2014–Jul 2015); 10% double-coded (kappa 0.95). Concerns: unrecorded episodes unknown (rates likely understated), gender unknown in 43% episodes, no age/country data, and Perth IDC's very small population may inflate its rate.
			Confounding and analysis	Some concerns	Rates are unadjusted: age and country of origin could not be extracted and gender was unknown in 43% of episodes. Facility populations differ (e.g. Perth IDC received medically transferred, mentally unwell detainees), so differences by detention type may reflect case mix. The design cannot establish causality.
Shishehgar et al. (2023)	Qualitative	CASP (Qualitative)	Research aim and qualitative design	Strength	The qualitative approach was appropriate for exploring the experiences of Iranian asylum-seeker women living with insecure residency.
			Recruitment and transferability	Some concerns	Findings are context-specific (Iranian women on bridging visas). Location and snowball sampling reached a hard-to-reach group but may not capture the diversity of asylum-seeker experiences.
			Data collection, reflexivity, ethics and analysis	Strength	Well reported: guide piloted, verbatim transcription with checked translation, dedicated researcher-position section, ethics approval with verbal consent and distress referral, and thematic analysis with independent co-author coding. Minor concerns: women with diagnosed severe depression/PTSD excluded, possible self-censoring, no participant feedback on findings.

Shishehgar et al. (2025)	Qualitative	CASP (Qualitative)	Research aim, qualitative design and analysis	Strength	Semi-structured interviews with inductive thematic analysis; three researchers coded independently and reconciled codes and themes in meetings. Methods describe a narrative approach, but analysis was thematic.
			Recruitment and transferability	Some concerns	Location sampling at one community centre (six months' engagement) plus snowballing; 17 Farsi-speaking Iranian women, with those diagnosed with severe depression/PTSD excluded. Transferability is limited, selection bias is possible, and those most affected may be under-represented.
			Ethics and informed consent	Strength	HREC approval (UTS reference reported), verbal informed consent from all participants, pseudonyms and de-identified transcripts.
			Reflexivity and interpretation	Some concerns	Some reflexivity: Farsi-speaking interviewer, journaling/debriefing, in-situ member checking, three independent coders. However, the researcher's role and rapport (6 months' prior engagement at the centre) and their possible influence on responses and interpretation are not discussed.
Hartley et al. (2017)	Qualitative	CASP (Qualitative)	Research aim and qualitative design	Strength	Semi-structured interviews were an appropriate way to explore physical activity engagement and barriers among asylum seekers living with prolonged uncertainty and no right to work.
			Recruitment and transferability	Some concerns	Participants were recruited through the authors' contacts and had lived on bridging visas for 2 weeks–9.5 months, which limits transferability to other asylum-seeker groups and settings and risks selection bias.
			Data collection, reflexivity, ethics and analysis	Some concerns	Interviews with 29 people (interpreters used), but 7 were not asked about physical activity or did not elaborate. No reflexivity statement despite recruitment through the authors' advocacy contacts. Verbal consent and confidentiality described, but ethics approval is attributed only to "the authors' university". Inductive thematic analysis with second-author cross-check.

Tosif et al. (2023)	Retrospective cross-sectional medical-record audit	JBI for Analytical Cross-Sectional Studies	Eligibility criteria, sample and setting	Some concerns	Population and setting are clearly defined (children <18 with a first visit to the Immigrant Health Service, 2012–2021, exposed to held detention directly or via parents; n = 277). Referral bias is likely (tertiary specialist service), so the sample may not represent all children in detention.
			Exposure and outcome measurement	Some concerns	Diagnoses required clinician diagnosis or DSM-5 criteria; extraction was done by six clinicians with secondary review by three. No validated trauma measure was used, and absent documentation was coded as negative, so prevalence is likely underestimated (acknowledged by authors).
			Confounding and statistical analysis	Some concerns	Descriptive methods suit the aim (n/%, median/IQR; Kruskal-Wallis and equality-of-proportions tests, Stata). However, Nauru/Manus vs Australia comparisons are unadjusted for confounders (e.g. age, detention duration, pre-detention trauma, parental mental illness).
			Applicability and causal inference	Some concerns	The retrospective single-centre cross-sectional design cannot establish causality (no pre-detention baseline or unexposed comparison group), and findings from a specialist clinic may not generalise to all detained children.
Fleay & Hartley (2016)	Qualitative	CASP (Qualitative)	Research aim and qualitative design	Strength	Clear aim and appropriate qualitative design: semi-structured, in-depth interviews with 29 asylum seekers living on bridging visas without the right to work.
			Recruitment and transferability	Some concerns	Participants were recruited through the authors' contacts (former asylum seekers and advocates) in Perth, Sydney and Melbourne and had lived on bridging visas for 2 weeks–9.5 months, which limits transferability and risks selection bias.

			Data collection, reflexivity, ethics and analysis	Some concerns	Interviews held with 29 adults but number of interview sessions was not stated. No ethics or consent statement, reflexivity discussion is reported (the related Hartley et al. 2017 paper reports approval and verbal consent). Thematic analysis is described as "deductive" but was not theory-led, and the coding process is not described.
Coffey et al. (2010)	Mixed methods	MMAT 2018	Qualitative methods	Strength	Semi-structured interviews (English n=10, interpreter n=7), recorded and transcribed, NVivo coding refined through group discussion; one participant not recorded (notes only).
			Quantitative descriptive methods	Some concerns	Validated, culturally adapted measures (HSCL-25, HTQ-PTSD, WHOQOL-Bref; Farsi/Arabic versions) with established cut-offs; descriptive analysis appropriate. Concerns: participants were recruited via a foundation for the survivors of tortures and referred to the research team. There was no comparison group.
			Integration of methods and findings	Some concerns	Strands agree and are reported together, but no mixed-methods rationale is given and no divergence between strands is discussed. The authors state the study was not designed to quantify causal relationships, yet the abstract describes current difficulties as the "legacy" of detention.
			Ethics and informed consent	Some concerns	Ethical approval was gotten from two institutions but no approval number was included.

			Sampling, recall and applicability	Some concerns	Small selected sample (17 of 34 invited; recruited via a torture-survivor service and support networks; one woman) and retrospective reporting of detention in 1999–2008 may affect recall. Findings cannot be generalised to all asylum seekers in Australia.
van Kooy & Bowman (2019)	Qualitative	CASP (Qualitative)	Research aim and qualitative design	Strength	Clear aim and appropriate qualitative design: semi-structured interviews on job search and employment experiences of asylum seekers, with a second round 18 months later.
			Recruitment and transferability	Some concerns	Convenience sample recruited through a community-based organisation's employment programme (only those in Australia ≥6 months with a caseworker); authors acknowledge self-selection and limited representativeness.
			Data collection, reflexivity, ethics and analysis	Some concerns	29 interviews with 20 asylum seekers (9 re-interviewed after 18 months). Consent procedures are well described (multiple written/verbal explanations, 30-day withdrawal), but no ethics committee approval is stated, researcher reflexivity is not discussed, and no description of data analysis is given.