



Refugee Council  
of Australia

MEDIA RELEASE

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## **REFUGEE COUNCIL WELCOMES DECISION ON 72 ASYLUM SEEKERS ON NAURU**

The Refugee Council of Australia today welcomed the decision of the Department of Immigration and Citizenship to grant refugee status to 72 of the 82 Sri Lankan asylum-seekers who have held on Nauru since March.

“This is a long-awaited, positive outcome for 72 young men who have demonstrated their need for international protection,” Refugee Council chief executive officer Paul Power said.

“Recognition of this group’s refugee status is the first step in ensuring that these men are able to rebuild their lives in peace and security,” Mr Power said. “But for this decision to have practical effect, these refugees need to be resettled as soon as possible.

“As Australia was the place in which this group sought protection, it seems only fair that the Australian Government should honour its commitment under the Refugee Convention and provide that protection in Australia.

“Past attempts by the Australian Government to encourage other countries to take our refugees have been less than successful. We should avoid this unnecessary delay and uncertainty by facilitating resettlement for this small group of refugees in Australia.”

Mr Power said the success of these applications for asylum again highlighted the fact that people desperate enough to undertake a risky sea voyage to Australia to seek asylum more often than not had a compelling case for protection.

“Given the high cost of maintaining offshore detention facilities, difficulties accessing legal representation and health care, as well as the eventual outcome of the cases, it is unclear why it was necessary to process these men’s claims on Nauru,” he said. “Such a decision could have been made while the men were housed on the Australian mainland.”