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REFUGEE COUNCIL WELCOMES AN END TO THE FAILED ‘PACIFIC SOLUTION’

The Refugee Council of Australia has welcomed the new Federal Government’s announcement that it has begun to dismantle the system of offshore detention of asylum-seekers, the so-called “Pacific Solution”.

Yesterday’s announcement by the Minister for Immigration and Citizenship, Senator Chris Evans, that Burmese refugees now held on Nauru will be resettled in Australia signalled the beginning of the end of the “Pacific Solution” and its years of government-inflicted misery, Refugee Council Chief Executive Officer Paul Power said.

“The so-called Pacific Solution was never a solution,” Mr Power said. “It was a failed policy that created great psychological damage to people who had committed no crime and undermined Australia’s international reputation on human rights.

“The policy, which cost Australian taxpayers more than \$300 million over six years, also failed to meet the former Prime Minister’s objective of preventing asylum-seekers arriving by boat from setting foot on Australian soil.

“After extended periods of detention, the overwhelming majority of former Pacific Solution detainees were able to demonstrate pressing needs for protection. Most of them now live in Australia or are New Zealand residents who will have access to Australia in the future,” Mr Power added.

“The resettlement of the Burmese refugees in Brisbane is a very positive step and we look forward to a rapid resolution to the cases of the other Sri Lankan refugees and asylum-seekers also on Nauru.”

Mr Power said the Refugee Council would be asking Senator Evans to ensure that future processing of all asylum-seekers is prompt and allows for fair access to legal assistance, options for administrative and judicial review, as well as appropriate trauma care and support.

“After six years, the policy of offshore detention has damaged everyone associated with it, including its political architects.”

“As the consequences of a wrong decision are dire when a person is seeking protection from the threat of persecution, it is imperative that asylum-seekers have access to the fairest possible assessment of their claims.”

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