



Refugee Council  
of Australia

**MEDIA RELEASE**

**August 17, 2007**

## **CLOSURE OF BAXTER DETENTION CENTRE A WELCOME STEP**

The Refugee Council of Australia has welcomed today's announcement by the Federal Government of the closure of the Baxter Immigration Detention Centre near Port Augusta in South Australia.

Refugee Council president John Gibson said the closure of Baxter Detention Centre was the latest in a series of changes in immigration detention arrangements since the Palmer and Comrie reports recommended sweeping changes in 2005.

"The Palmer and Comrie reports highlighted the urgent need for change to Australia's immigration detention system, resulting in far-reaching changes to detention policies, a reduction in the average length of incarceration and the introduction of new alternatives to detention," Mr Gibson said.

"As a result, the number of people in immigration detention centres has declined from more than 1000 in early 2005 to 328 earlier this month."

Baxter Immigration Detention Centre is the fourth detention centre to close since 2002, following earlier closures of the Curtin, Woomera and Port Hedland centres.

"Like the other centres closed previously, the closure of the Baxter centre will be unlamented by those who were incarcerated there," Mr Gibson said.

"Many people left Baxter with significant psychological damage. For some who came to our country to seek asylum, this exacerbated torture and trauma they experienced in their country of origin."

Mr Gibson said the closure of the \$40 million centre was not the sign of a successful "border protection" strategy but another welcome step away from a discredited, damaging and costly regime of immigration detention.

"We continue to encourage the Federal Government to continue to explore workable alternatives to detention, recognising the progress already achieved," Mr Gibson said.