



Refugee Council of Australia

Media Release – for immediate release

17 September, 2010

Time to review detention policy

The Refugee Council of Australia (RCOA) is deeply concerned at plans to increase space to detain asylum seekers in Curtin defence facility near Derby WA and to open a new facility near Weipa in far North Queensland.

"The use of Scherger RAAF base to house asylum seekers, even for a short period of time, is inappropriate, given that Weipa is one of the most isolated places on mainland Australia," Paul Power, CEO of the Refugee Council of Australia, said. "This population of asylum seekers will include torture and trauma survivors, and services for them will be very difficult to deliver in a location such as this."

The Refugee Council urges the Government to review the criteria for detaining boat arrival asylum seekers. The 2008 New Directions in Detention policy was put in place to ensure that people who passed health, compliance and security checks could be moved into the community, as there was no need to detain them. Currently, this policy is only being used for asylum seekers who arrive by plane with a temporary visa.

"As the new Minister for Immigration and Citizenship, Chris Bowen, settles into his position, we will be urging him to ask the Department to explore alternatives to detention rather than just finding additional places of detention. Australia is the only country with which applies a policy of mandatory detention to so many of its asylum seekers.

"Instead of looking at where to detain people, the Australian Government should be looking at the example of other countries and also at how current Australian policy applies to other categories of asylum seekers. The approach of detaining all asylum seekers arriving by boat for the entire time that it takes to process their applications for asylum is unnecessary, inhumane and ridiculously expensive.

"A system which allows asylum seekers, after necessary checks are completed, to live independently while their long-term status is resolved would be much more just and a vast improvement on current arrangements ."

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The Refugee Council of Australia represents
non-government organisations and
individuals working with and for refugees
in Australia and around the world