



Refugee Council
of Australia

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MANUS ISLAND DEAL IS PACIFIC SOLUTION 2.0

The Australian Government has returned to the Pacific Solution with its signing today of a MOU with Papua New Guinea to establish an “assessment centre for asylum seekers” on Manus Island, the Refugee Council of Australia says.

RCOA chief executive officer Paul Power wrote last week to Foreign Affairs Minister Kevin Rudd and Immigration Minister Chris Bowen expressing his organisation’s concern about the possible re-establishment of arrangements to detain asylum seekers on Manus Island.

“Internationally, the reopening of the centre on Manus Island will be viewed in the same way that the opening of the centre in 2001 was viewed – as Australia paying a much poorer neighbour to accept extra-territorial processing of asylum seekers to whom Australia has protection obligations,” Mr Power said in his letter to Mr Rudd and Mr Bowen.

“This really is a return to the ‘Pacific Solution’ which the Government repudiated in 2007 and shut down in early 2008. Asylum seekers would be transferred to Manus Island under the legislative provisions the Howard Government introduced to enact the ‘Pacific Solution’ and it now appears that they would be kept in some of the same facilities used previously for extra-territorial detention.

“The Government has been rightly critical of the Opposition’s proposal to reopen a detention centre on Nauru, with Mr Bowen noting on a number of occasions that many people were left for a long time on Nauru and were very damaged in the process. We cannot see how sending people to Manus Island would differ in any significant way from sending them to Nauru.”

To view the Refugee Council’s letter, see

http://www.refugeecouncil.org.au/resources/statements/110812_CBowen_KRudd_Manus.pdf

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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