



Refugee Council
of Australia

22 December 2011

NAURU IS NO SOLUTION

The Federal Government's decision today to revisit Nauru as a destination for boat arrivals to Australia is no solution for asylum seekers fleeing war and persecution.

RCOA Chief Executive Officer Paul Power said the prospect of returning to offshore processing in Nauru would further set back genuine progress on regional cooperation.

"The Government and Opposition must kick their addiction to short-term political fixes and start the hard work of solving the problem at its source – in the Asia region where refugees and asylum seekers lack adequate protection.

"Until refugees and asylum seekers find basic levels of protection in countries like Indonesia, Thailand and Malaysia, they don't need to put their lives at risk and their families at risk of people-smugglers and dangerous boat journeys.

Mr Power said the Federal Government had made modest progress in this area through the Bali process, where regional countries in South-East and South Asia have recognised the need for collective action on refugee protection.

"A return to the Pacific Solution risks trashing the hard work achieved through the Bali Process.

"It will send the wrong message to countries in South-East Asia and South Asia.

"How can Australia encourage nations like Indonesia, Thailand and Malaysia to share the responsibility of protecting asylum seekers when its policy response is to outsource its responsibilities to countries like Nauru?

Mr Power said the Government was entertaining a return to a system Prime Minister Julia Gillard had dismissed only six months ago as "costly, unsustainable and wrong as a matter of principle."

"Right now, engaging Australia's neighbours to start taking action to protect refugees and asylum seekers should be the number one agenda for the Government and the Opposition, not a return to failed policies in the hope they will deliver political paydirt in 2013," Mr Power said.

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