



Refugee Council
of Australia



When Mathi arrived in Toronto in December, he was greeted not only by his Ads Up sponsorship team but by seven friends, previously detained on Nauru and now resettled in USA, who drove to Canada to see him.

FINDING FREEDOM IN CANADA

An update on Operation Not Forgotten – May 2023

The Operation Not Forgotten (ONF) partnership between Australians and Canadians to support the resettlement of refugees previously detained on Nauru and Manus Island has seen the number of refugees arriving in Canada more than double in the past four months. Between December 2022 and March 2023, 20 refugees have arrived in Canada and have been resettled in Vancouver and eight cities and towns in Ontario, Alberta and Saskatchewan. The arrival of the 20 newcomers to Canada takes the total number of refugees resettled with the support of ONF donors to 32 (as at 30 April 2023).

The MOSAIC team in Vancouver and Ads Up Canada volunteers in five provinces are expecting to welcome more newcomers in coming months. All 21 refugees seeking sponsorship from Nauru have completed their interviews with Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC). Nine have completed medicals, with one due to travel very soon. The other 12 are waiting for the completion of background checks. The 27 applicants in PNG have also completed their IRCC interviews, with seven having completed medicals and 20 waiting on background checks. Of the 83 in Australia, 10 are expected to travel soon, 25 have completed medicals and are waiting for travel arrangements, 25 are undergoing background checks and 23 are waiting for their IRCC interviews.

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The Refugee Council of Australia
is the national umbrella body
for refugees, people seeking asylum
and the organisations and individuals
who support them • Founded 1981

	Nauru	PNG	Australia	Sub-total	Separated family	Total
In Canada	10	14	8	32	0	32
Separated family soon to arrive in Canada	0	0	0	0	22	22
Active applications	21	27	83	131	108	239
Total	31	41	91	163	130	293

Since 2019, ONF has focused on providing hope for refugees not accepted for resettlement in USA. However, the US State Department has reviewed some applications and 19 refugees who had applied to go to Canada have been offered and accepted resettlement in USA. Another 12 applicants have withdrawn their sponsorship applications and four have been rejected by IRCC.

For those now in Canada, the challenges of adjusting to life in a new country are significant, particularly after years of being denied the right to make the most basic of choices such as what to eat, where to live or where to work. Those who lived and worked for a time in Australia have, as expected, tended to adjust more rapidly than those who have resettled directly from Nauru or PNG but the good news is that all 32 people resettled so far are working or are in training programs aimed at helping them find sustainable work.

MOSAIC has employed Myo Win, who spent eight years on Nauru before being resettled to Canada last year, as a full-time resettlement caseworker to support the new arrivals. Discussions about how to match job opportunities in Canada with individuals' past experience and their hopes for the future have highlighted many skilled and experienced professionals among those being resettled – and how much talent has been wasted over the past 10 years as a result of Australia's offshore detention policy.

Many of those who have settled recently are looking forward to reuniting with the spouses and children they have been separated from for the past decade. The Canadian sponsorship process requires sponsors to set aside funds for separated members of the immediate family (spouses and children up to the age of 22). The initial member of the family to arrive has 12 months to lodge an application for family reunion. Applications have already been lodged for many of the 22 separated family members of the refugees who have arrived so far. While the first family reunion is yet to occur, we can expect many tearful and joyful arrivals in Canada in the months and years to come.

ONF featured in new documentary

The work of the ONF team in Vancouver has featured in a documentary, "Finding Freedom", which explores the resettlement experiences in Canada, USA and Norway of refugees previously detained on Manus Island and Nauru. The documentary, a Canadian production directed by Alan Goldman, explains Australia's destructive and degrading offshore processing policy to an international audience and looks at the settlement experiences of each of the four refugees, including Amin who has resettled in Vancouver with the support of ONF. In the documentary, Iris Challoner, manager of MOSAIC's Private Refugee Sponsorship Program, shares her experiences of the ONF partnership.

"Finding Freedom" can be viewed for free on the Waterbear documentary platform. To get access:

1. Click on this link: [Finding Freedom documentary](#)
2. Create a free Waterbear account, following the instructions on the screen.
3. Sign into your Waterbear account once you have created it.
4. Watch the "Finding Freedom" documentary

