



Refugee Council of Australia

24 March 2022

Australians welcome NZ's generosity to refugees in offshore processing

The New Zealand Government's announcement today of 450 resettlement places over three years for refugees caught up in Australia's offshore processing regime will be welcomed by millions of Australians, the Refugee Council of Australia (RCOA) says.

"New Zealand's generosity in making these places available will make a life-changing difference to 450 of the refugees who have so far endured nine excruciating years suffering in Australia's offshore arrangements, much of that time in locked detention," RCOA chief executive officer Paul Power said.

"This offer from the New Zealand Government is extraordinary, given how poorly the Australian Government has behaved since the offer of resettlement was first made nine years ago. Today's announcement will be welcomed by millions of Australians distressed by their government's appalling mistreatment of refugees sent to detention in Nauru and Manus Island and disgusted by Australia's previous refusal to accept New Zealand's help.

"The offer of 150 places a year was first made in 2013 by then Prime Minister John Key and reconfirmed by his successors Bill English and Jacinda Ardern despite the apparent lack of interest from the Australian Government. Ironically, the Australian Government has always needed New Zealand's support to maintain the policy of insisting that refugees recognised in Nauru and Papua New Guinea end up in countries other than Australia – but this has not been reflected in the high-handed and sometimes insulting response to New Zealand's offer of assistance.

"The agreement will not apply to people left in PNG. In December, the Australian Government abandoned those remaining in PNG when it formally ended its agreement with the PNG Government. People were given a few weeks to decide whether to remain in PNG or transfer to Nauru but were given little useful information about the implications of transferring or not transferring.

"While the Australian resettlement deal with New Zealand does not include the 104 people remaining in PNG, the United Nations Refugee Agency (UNHCR) and the New Zealand Government have an agreement to work separately on referrals for eligible people there. This is welcome news for the people in PNG who have felt abandoned by the Australian Government.

"As generous as the New Zealand offer is, more than 500 people affected by the offshore processing policy – most of them with refugee status – will be left with nowhere to go even if the current resettlement options to the United States and Canada and the offer of 450 places in New Zealand are fully utilised.

"Of the 3,127 people sent to detention in Nauru and Manus Island in 2013 and 2014 under Australia's offshore processing policy, around 1,384 people remain in Nauru, PNG and Australia. There are around 270 refugees with applications for the United States and 159 current applications for sponsorship to Canada as part of [Operation #NotForgotten](#), the community partnership led by RCOA, MOSAIC in Vancouver and Ads Up Canada. If all of these places are filled and 450 refugees are resettled to New Zealand, 505 people in Nauru, PNG and Australia will be left with no solution."

For further comment or to arrange an interview, contact our media team on 0488 035 535 or at media@refugeecouncil.org.au.

PEOPLE SUBJECT TO OFFSHORE PROCESSING (On Nauru, PNG, or now in Australia)

As at March 2022

Total people requiring resettlement on Nauru, PNG, and in Australia: **1,384 people**

❖ Approximately 85-90% of people are recognised refugees

Papua New Guinea (PNG): **104 people**

- 45 people in USA process
- 38 people in Canada process

Nauru: **112 people**

- 40 people in USA process
- 36 people in Canada process

Australia: **1,168 people**

(51 in closed detention, 541 in community detention, 576 in community with most on Final Departure Bridging Visas)

- ~185 people in USA process
- 79 people in Canada process

TOTAL PEOPLE IN NEED OF RESETTLEMENT: 1,384

Current resettlement places available:

- ~270 people still in USA process¹
- ~159 people active in Canadian process²
- 450 places (150 places each year over three years) with New Zealand

TOTAL RESETTLEMENT PLACES AVAILABLE: ~ 879

Total number of people requiring resettlement 1,384 minus current places available 879 = 505

505 PEOPLE WITHOUT A LASTING SETTLEMENT OPTION*

*If all current resettlement places are fully realised

BACKGROUND: 3,127 people sent to Nauru & PNG since July 2013

Where are they now?³

- About 700 returned to countries of origin
- 14 have died (6 suicides, 1 murder, 3 accidents, 1 heart attack, 3 due to preventable medical complications)
- 7 sent to Cambodia but only 1 left (now with wife and child)
- 1,000 resettled to USA
- 22 resettled to Canada
- 13 resettled to 8 other countries
- 1 granted asylum in New Zealand
- **1,384 remain - 104 in PNG, 112 in Nauru, 1,168 in Australia**

¹ USA Resettlement Arrangement agreed between the Obama Administration and the Turnbull Government in 2016.

² Canadian Private Sponsorship organised by an Australian and Canadian community partnership called Operation #NotForgotten see: <https://www.refugeecouncil.org.au/canada/>

³ Refugee Council estimates from multiple, sometimes conflicting, government sources