

# Project SafeCom News and Updates

Monday, 9 May 2016

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# 1. Asylum seekers at Broadmeadows subjected to tough new security measures, advocates say

ABC News Online

By Jessica Longbottom

Posted Thu 5 May 2016, 5:39pm

Detainees at the Broadmeadows detention centre in Melbourne's north are being subjected to increasingly strict security measures and substandard conditions, according to asylum seeker advocates.

Two weeks ago, single men, women and families at the centre were moved to separate secure compounds and are no longer able to move freely around the centre.

A Department of Immigration spokesman confirmed the changes, saying "the new model will enhance the department's ability to maintain a secure and safe centre".

Sally Hunter, an asylum seeker advocate, said the single men were moved to a newly built facility and were sleeping two to a very small room in bunk beds.

Previously, detainees had their own rooms.

"Apparently the bottom bunk - they can't even sit up in their bunk bed so it's very, very confined conditions for two adults," Ms Hunter said.

She said detainees were also unable to visit friends in other areas of the centre while their movement in outside areas had been severely restricted.

"One of our big concerns is there are people there who have physical disabilities who need to walk around regularly," Ms Hunter said.

"People are also suffering from mental illness ... they need to be able to get out and away from other people to get fresh air and exercise. That capacity has been severely reduced."

## ***New detainees arrived at centre from Darwin, advocates say***

Several asylum advocates in Melbourne and Darwin said the changes came as about 20 asylum seekers from the Wickham Point Detention Centre in Darwin were transferred to the centre on Wednesday night.

"I believe because of the closures of the other centres, they're bringing people in and [Broadmeadows detention centre] could potentially become full capacity," Ms Hunter said.

"That's why they're squeezing people into smaller spaces."

The Government this week announced it was closing 17 detention centres, including Wickham Point.

The Department of Immigration said it would not comment on specific transfers.

"Detainee transfers within the immigration detention network are routine for the department and can occur for a number of reasons, including medical or legal purposes, to ease accommodation pressures at certain sites or for other operational reasons," a spokesman said.

Department of Immigration figures show as of March 31, 2016, 77 people were living at the Broadmeadows detention centre.

## ***Broadmeadows is now like 'a high-security prison'***

Pamela Curr, from the Asylum Seeker Resource Centre (ASRC), said the change in conditions at the centre in recent weeks had been marked.

"The Broadmeadows centre has transitioned from what was probably the most friendly of the centres to a high-security prison," she said.

Ms Hunter said asylum seekers now had to put forward a formal request at least a day in advance to visit friends in other areas of the facility.

"In the last week, we've noticed a decline in people's mental health, people are very stressed," Ms Hunter said.

The Department of Immigration confirmed it had changed the procedures for detainees wanting to visit others within the detention centres.

"Where practicable, visits between detainees from different compounds will be facilitated in the visits centre upon receipt and approval of a request," a spokesman said.

Ms Curr said she believed security at the centre had been gradually ramped up since the Australian Border Force took a more active role in controlling onshore detention centres last year.

"Heightened security and risk aversion policies have become harder each day," she said.

<http://www.abc.net.au/news/2016-05-05/detainees-at-broadmeadows-subjected-to-tough-new-security/7388836>

## 2. Two More Nauru Refugees Volunteer to Resettle in Cambodia

The Cambodia Daily  
by Aun Pheap and Zsombor Peter  
May 5, 2016

Two more refugees being held by Australia in an offshore detention facility have volunteered to relocate to Cambodia, an immigration official said on Wednesday, a sign that the teetering resettlement deal between the two countries has yet to run its course.

Kerm Sarin, administration chief at the Interior Ministry's immigration department, said the two new volunteers from the refugee camp on the South Pacific island of Nauru had yet to submit formal applications. The news follows reports that two refugees on Nauru self-immolated over the past week.

If approved, the pair will join the two others who have left Nauru for Phnom Penh—and stayed—since Cambodia accepted a \$30 million aid package from Australia in September 2014 in exchange for taking in an unspecified number of the hundreds of refugees on the tiny island.

"Australia has informed us that two more people have volunteered to come to Cambodia," Mr. Sarin said on Wednesday.

"This is only unofficial information from Australia, and we have not yet received any official letter," he said. "We will review the documents in the resettlement requests of the volunteer refugees and submit them to the minister for a decision."

Mr. Sarin said he did not know the gender, age or nationality of the two volunteers, or whether they were related.

A spokeswoman for the office of Australian Immigration Minister Peter Dutton did not reply to a request for comment.

Only five of the refugees on Nauru have moved to Phnom Penh since Cambodia and Australia clinched the resettlement deal with a champagne toast at the Interior Ministry more than a year and a half ago. But three of them, a man from Burma and a married couple from Iran, have since opted to return home rather than stay in Cambodia.

Ian Rintoul, spokesman for the Sydney-based Refugee Action Coalition, said some of the refugees on Nauru might still see Cambodia as a stepping stone to someplace better, even if Australia had made it clear that its shores were firmly out of reach.

He said the self-immolation of a refugee on Nauru on Monday, the second in a week, might also compel some to consider Cambodia, but remained doubtful that the transfers would ever amount to more than a trickle.

"The sheer brutality and horror of what has happened recently on Nauru may drive small numbers to consider Cambodia to be an alternative," he said. "We also have the recent efforts of the Australian government to reiterate that there is no alternative but Cambodia. What is striking is that so few people are willing to consider Cambodia [in] spite of the deteriorating circumstances on Nauru."

"I doubt there will ever be more than a few individuals who may be driven to consider going to Cambodia," he added. "It is perfectly clear that the Cambodia solution proposed by the Australian government is an expensive farce."

Despite the slight interest in Cambodia, Mr. Dutton has continued to defend the deal as an effective deterrent against attempts by would-be asylum seekers to reach Australia.

<https://www.cambodiadaily.com/news/two-more-nauru-refugees-volunteer-to-resettle-in-cambodia-112184/>

### **3. Marco Bulmer-Rizzi sent immigration department email saying dead husband overstayed visa**

ABC News Online

By Simon O'Brien

Posted Thu 5 May 2016, 10:14am

A day before travelling from the UK to Greece to spread his dead husband's ashes, Marco Bulmer-Rizzi read an immigration department email sent to his deceased husband warning he was overstaying his visa in Australia.

David Bulmer-Rizzi, 32, died while he and Marco were on their honeymoon in Adelaide.

Because South Australia does not recognise same-sex marriages from overseas, their marriage was not initially recorded on David's death certificate and Marco Bulmer-Rizzi was not recognised as next of kin.

South Australian Premier Jay Weatherill later intervened to remove the description of "never married".

However Mr Bulmer-Rizzi went on to describe the incident as "a personal attack on David, on our memories" and said "it was the most humiliating moment of my life".

Yesterday Mr Bulmer-Rizzi was traumatised again when he received an automatically redirected email which Australia's Department of Immigration and Border Protection had sent to his husband warning him he had overstayed his visa in Australia.

"I went into emotional meltdown for a few hours," Mr Bulmer-Rizzi said.

"It was bringing back so much of those dark days and experiences that I was completely overwhelmed.

"I feel like I cannot remember David for his laughter, for his jokes, for his smiles, but just for all the bureaucratic nightmares we are forced to go through.

"David's biggest legacy in Australia should be the organs he donated so selflessly, not being listed as an illegal immigrant."

Mr Bulmer-Rizzi said he carried his husband's ashes and passport with him when he returned to Britain after the death and showed the passport to immigration officials in both countries.

"When I left Australia I told the immigration desk at Adelaide Airport that I was carrying David's ashes and his passport was with mine – they should have noted it right there and then," he said.

"And in any event there has to be a way to communicate between the death and birth register office and the immigration team.

"There must be hundreds if not thousands of foreign nationals that dies every year. Surely they all cannot be getting these letters? And if they do it's devastating for the families and it has to be controlled."

He said he hoped to receive an apology from the department and see that action was being taken to prevent the same thing happening to others.

"They need some proper process in place," he said.

"There are people, families, who are in pieces and can barely survive each day and they cannot receive an email like that. It is also false and inaccurate."

The Department of Immigration and Border Protection has been contacted for comment.

<http://www.abc.net.au/news/2016-05-05/marco-bulmer-rizzi-immigration-letter-sent-to-deceased-man/7386210>

### **4. NT Chief Minister disappointed with plan to close Darwin's Wickham Point Detention Centre**

ABC News Online

By Katherine Gregory

Posted Wed 4 May 2016, 3:06pm

The Northern Territory's Chief Minister wants the Wickham Point Detention Centre to remain open, despite asylum seeker advocates applauding the Federal Government's plan to close the facility by November.

The Federal Government has announced it will close four immigration detention centres across Australia to consolidate its onshore detention network and save almost \$70 million.

It includes Wickham Point in Darwin, Villawood in Sydney, Maribyrnong in Melbourne and Perth's residential facility.

The Northern Territory's Chief Minister, Adam Giles, said just before the announcement he hoped the Darwin facility would remain open.

"I have a firm position on the detention facility here in the Top End," Mr Giles said.

"Darwin is the frontline of defence of northern Australia and at the time when the Federal Government is closing detention centres around this nation they must keep the Darwin detention centre open."

Mr Giles also said the Federal Government needed to honour a memorandum of understanding it made with Territory police to provide an additional 94 officers to bolster security at the detention facility.

He said need was demonstrated by a Wickham Point detainee's attempted escape on Monday afternoon.

"If the Federal Government pursue this agenda of wanting to remove the detention centre out of Darwin and either putting it down south or in another position, I think it leaves Australia pretty bare with facilities to be able to meet the need of any likely future illegal arrival that may turn up on our shores," Mr Giles said.

The union representing workers at Wickham Point said it was too early to comment on how the closure would affect its members.

### ***Closure is long overdue: asylum seeker support group***

Natasha Blucher from the Darwin Asylum Seeker Support and Advocacy Network (DASSAN) said the planned closure was long overdue.

"The facility is in a very remote location and there's a lack of services in the Northern Territory region to assist asylum seekers," Ms Blucher said.

"In addition the harsh environment of the location means in our view the facility should never have been built."

Ms Blucher said the centre was originally built for maximum security and had significant structural problems.

"It means Wickham has high fences, electrical fences, it has a lot of security hardware. And the environment itself is not conducive to a healthy living environment," Ms Blucher said.

"The place is next to a swamp, there's always a problem with midges and mosquitoes, it's quite hot and the way the detention centre is set up with dongas on top of dongas means there's a lack of natural light and it's quite an oppressive environment."

DASSAN also said the closure of onshore centres meant the Government was in a position to close offshore processing centres in Nauru and Manus Island.

"It must be in a position to work with the region to assist the UNHCR to process claims in South-East Asia and create an orderly resettlement program there," Ms Blucher said.

"I mean if the numbers have lowered to that extent, then it means that there are resources in the department that are freed up to work on those sorts of issues."

Ms Blucher said the Wickham Point detainees would most likely be sent to other centres in southern states and she hoped some would be released into community detention.

<http://www.abc.net.au/news/2016-05-04/disappointment-over-plan-to-close-darwin-detention-centre/7384416>

## **4. Asylum seekers reach Australian territory**

PerthNow  
May 3, 2016 12:17pm  
Staff writers  
News Corp Australia Network

AN asylum seeker boat carrying Sri Lankan people reportedly arrived in the Cocos Islands on Monday morning.

A local told ABC that he spotted a 10-11 metre wooden boat approaching Home Island, with police and customs waiting for their arrival.

Awie Rasa, who was taking a ferry from Home Island, spotted the boat about 10.45am on Monday, he told ABC Hack.

He said he heard it didn't reach Home Island, and anchored about 500m off shore.

It is believed there were 12 people on board.

The Cocos Islands are a chain two atolls and 27 coral islands, with a population of about 600 people.

<http://www.perthnow.com.au/news/asylum-seekers-reach-australian-territory/news-story/b4fdee856a426f17e05968e912cc8858>

## **6. 'Asylum seeker boat' arrives in the Australian territory of the Cocos Islands**

Observers say the boat, reported to be carrying asylum seekers from Sri Lanka, arrived on Monday

The Guardian  
Helen Davidson  
Tuesday 3 May 2016 16.30 AEST

A wooden boat, which observers said was clearly an asylum seeker vessel, made it to the Cocos Islands under its own steam and without interception on Monday.

The boat, reported by the ABC's Hack program to be carrying asylum seekers from Sri Lanka, motored into the lagoon between the two largest islands in the archipelago on Monday morning.

Guardian Australia has independently verified its arrival with two sources. Guardian Australia understands the boat arrived in the lagoon without interception by Australian officials.

The 27 islands in the Cocos Keeling group, west of Christmas Island, are Australian territory. They have a population of just a few hundred people.

Awie Rasa, who was traveling on a ferry when the boat arrived, told the ABC he saw police and customs officials heading out to reach it.

"The customs on the jetty are running up and down and getting their tenders into the water," Rasa said.

"I heard it didn't reach Home Island, just anchorage around about 500m away from Home Island. That's pretty close."

Rasa, a boat skipper, told the ABC he had previously worked to escort asylum seeker vessels and he recognised this arrival as a Sri Lankan-style boat.

The Australian federal police referred questions to the immigration department, which in turn referred them to the minister, Peter Dutton.

Dutton's office has not yet responded.

<http://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2016/may/03/asylum-seeker-boat-arrives-in-cocos-islands>

## **7. Asylum seekers flown back to Sri Lanka from Cocos Islands**

The Age  
May 6, 2016 - 11:24AM  
Bianca Hall

A group of asylum seekers whose wooden boat made it to within 500 metres of the Cocos Islands have been flown back to Sri Lanka in the cover of night, in a highly-secretive operation.

The small boat was intercepted close to the Indian Ocean archipelago, about halfway between Australia and Sri Lanka, in rough weather on Monday morning.

Then, local eyewitnesses said, it was carrying an estimated 12 asylum seekers.

But on Friday morning another local witness, who asked not to be named, said there were more than 12 asylum seekers on board, and said the group included women and children - including at least one infant.

He said the asylum seekers were transferred from the Ocean Protector customs vessel on to a smaller boat, before being taken to West Island, where they were loaded onto a bus.

Australian officials covered up all the windows, in an attempt to shield what was happening from a gathering group of locals.

But at least one local photographer was able to capture what transpired. It's understood he is negotiating to sell his photographs.

It is understood to be the first boat in about two years to make it so close to the Cocos Islands, although the government has turned back at least one other boat in the past year.

Immigration Minister Peter Dutton refused to say whether the chartered airbus was carrying asylum seekers, reported the ABC.

His office did not return calls on Friday morning but flight records show a plane with registration identical to the plane photographed by locals on the Cocos Islands' airport departed Cocos Island for Colombo, the Sri Lankan capital, overnight.

The asylum route to the Cocos Islands opened up in earnest in 2012, when Sri Lanka's senior envoy in Canberra confirmed his government recently stopped a boat carrying more than 110 people departing for Australia via the Indian Ocean.

Before this, people-smuggling syndicates had not historically targeted Cocos Islands, preferring to send boats to Australian territory closer to Indonesia – either Christmas Island, south of Java, or Ashmore Reef off West Timor.

The distance between Ashmore Reef and the Cocos Islands is more than 4000 kilometres, a massive expanse to patrol.

<http://www.theage.com.au/federal-politics/political-news/asylum-seekers-flown-back-to-sri-lanka-from-cocos-islands-20160506-gonsvx.html>

## **8. Cocos Islander 'heartbroken' after women, children board plane with blacked out windows**

ABC News Online  
By Joseph Dunstan  
Posted Sat 7 May 2016, 9:04am

A Cocos Islands resident says she was "heartbroken" to see women and small children among a group of asylum seekers flown off the islands on a night-time flight, after apparently arriving on a fishing boat intercepted by Australian authorities.

The residents told the ABC they watched a group of people board a plane and fly off the island on Thursday night after a fishing vessel was intercepted earlier in the week.

Immigration Minister Peter Dutton refused to comment on the whereabouts of the passengers.

A small group of residents went to the airport on Thursday night to watch the group board the plane.

Local businessman Tony Lacey said the boat passengers travelled to the airport on a bus that had its windows blacked out.

"It was about 8:30 at night, we didn't see much at all, the asylum seekers were getting on at the rear of the plane, which meant it was out of sight for most onlookers," Mr Lacey said.

A local gave triple j's Hack a video they said was captured at the airport, showing a mini-bus with covered windows and a large white passenger jet on the runway.

Cocos Island resident Leah Stratford said she wanted to say hello to the group, which she said included women and children.

"I felt sad that when they got up on the plane, the windows where they were all seated, at the back of the plane, were all blanked out with some kind of screen or white paper so they couldn't see out, we couldn't see them," she said.

"Just as an island and as a community ... they were people, that passed through our small island, we just wanted to wave and say hello, maybe get a smile out of them."

Local residents said the group waited inside the bus for more than two hours before they were transferred onto the plane.

"I know what it's like as a mum with small kids if you're having to sit on a bus for a couple of hours, they were probably a bit tired and ratty," Ms Stratford said.

"I was a little bit heartbroken that they were faceless people ... I could see little arms and legs sticking out from over shoulders and flopped over this way and that."

A flight tracking website showed a flight listed to depart from Cocos, but with no destination, landed in the Sri Lankan capital Colombo early Friday morning, according to refugee activist Jessie Taylor.

The Department of Immigration told the ABC it does not comment on on-water matters.

<http://www.abc.net.au/news/2016-05-07/cocos-islanders-say-boat-arrivals-flown-away/7392390>

## **9. Asylum seekers deported from Cocos Islands arrested by Sri Lankan police**

Group of 12 taken from Colombo airport directly into the custody of the criminal investigation department

The Guardian  
Ben Doherty  
Saturday 7 May 2016 16.16 AEST

The 12 Sri Lankan asylum seekers deported from Australia's Cocos Islands have been arrested and taken into police custody in Colombo.

The group, which included a woman, one child, and one infant, were flown back on a secret charter flight from the islands overnight on Thursday.

The Australian government has declined to comment on the arrival of the asylum-seeker boat at Cocos, or the group's rapid forced removal, saying only "the government does not comment on on-water matters".

However, flight records of the chartered jet that took the asylum seekers away, as well as Sri Lankan government officials and video evidence of the group's arrival in Colombo, confirm they have been removed.

The group was taken from the airport directly into the custody of the criminal investigation department of the Sri Lanka police.

Video footage of them arriving shows them being escorted through Colombo's Bandaranaike airport, some trying to cover their faces, before being marshalled into a police vehicle. The infant appears asleep in a man's arms.

Lakshman Soysa, an immigration and emigration media spokesman, told the Daily Mirror in Sri Lanka that all of the deportees had been arrested on arrival and handed over to the Criminal Investigation Department.

Several media reports in Sri Lanka suggest that some of the members of the group had tried to reach Australia previously.

Typically, asylum seekers who are returned to Sri Lanka are held in police custody or Negombo prison. They face a magistrate's court and are usually fined for the offence of illegally leaving the country. Some spend weeks, or even months in jail, and the fines can be up to 100,000 rupees (\$A930).

According to reports from the Cocos Islands, the asylum-seeker boat arrived in the lagoon between two populated islands on Monday, before being met by the Customs vessel Ocean Protector.

The group was transferred to the Customs vessel, before being moved on Thursday to a third boat, and brought to the Cocos' West Island, where they were transferred to a bus.

A person on the island told Guardian Australia the transfer was "done cloak and dagger style".

Cardboard was placed over the windows of the bus used "to minimise people getting eyes on them". The group was placed on board a chartered jet, which left the island at 9:30pm Thursday, arriving at Colombo's Bandaranaike airport in the early hours of Friday.

It appears the 12 had their refugee claims assessed on board one of the boats, under the "enhanced screening" procedure introduced by the Gillard Labor government in 2012, which has attracted serious international criticism.

Assessments can be as short as asylum seekers being asked four questions: their name, country of origin, where they departed from, and why they had left.

In 2014, after Australia returned 41 Sri Lankan asylum seekers intercepted at sea, the UNHCR said the abbreviated assessment process was unlawful under international law.

"UNHCR has previously made known its concerns to Australia about its enhanced screening procedures and their non-compliance with international law," it said.



“UNHCR’s experience over the years with shipboard processing has generally not been positive. Such an environment would rarely afford an appropriate venue for a fair procedure.”

Under the 1951 Refugees Convention, to which Australia is a party, and under customary international law, countries cannot “refoules” a person, that is, send them back to a place where they will face harm.

Rights groups worldwide have raised serious concerns about Sri Lankan asylum seekers – particularly members of the ethnic Tamil minority – being returned. In the UK, deportations to Sri Lanka have been halted by the high court, and government documents show at least 15 Tamil asylum seekers sent back to Sri Lanka subsequently escaped again and were granted refugee status because they had been tortured upon return.

Several reports have alleged that asylum seekers returned from Australia to Sri Lanka have faced arbitrary arrest, persecution, police brutality, and torture.

The boat that reached Cocos Islands this week is one of only a handful to have reached Australian territorial waters in the past two years. Last November, an asylum-seeker boat came within 200 metres of Flying Fish Cove on Christmas Island. That vessel was intercepted and towed out to sea.

Last February, four Sri Lankan asylum seekers, intercepted in a boat near the Cocos Islands, were transferred at sea to the custody of the Sri Lankan navy.

Asylum-seeker boats still attempt to reach Australia – though at a much lower rate than at the peak of boat arrivals in 2011 and 2012 – but most are intercepted and forced back before they reach Australian territorial waters.

<http://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2016/may/07/asylum-seekers-deported-from-cocos-islands-arrested-by-sri-lankan-police>

## **10. Nauru border chief pleads with refugees to use time on the island constructively, makes conciliatory statements**

ABC Radio - Pacific Beat  
By Michael Walsh, staff  
Posted Fri 6 May 2016, 7:34am

The Nauruan Government has made what is widely seen as a conciliatory statement, calling for unity between Nauruans and the island nation's refugees.

"We are aware that you did not design to come to Nauru and that many of you do not plan to stay here permanently," Border Protection Minister David Adeang said in a national address broadcast over Nauru radio in several languages and on YouTube.

"We understand how distressing it must be for time to pass with few long-term solutions being offered to you."

The statement comes in the aftermath of two refugees who set themselves on fire on Nauru: Iranian refugee Omid Masoumali, who died last week following the incident, while the other, 21-year-old Hodan Yasin, remains in critical condition.

"I want to express, on behalf of the Government of Nauru and the Nauruan people, how deeply saddened and concerned we are by the recent tragic incidents."

However Mr Adeang says his Government is still working on long-term resettlement options for the refugees, but in the meantime, he is urging refugees to use their time constructively by taking up opportunities in business or getting an education.

The minister also hinted at the prospect of the refugees' family members coming to visit Nauru.

"Nauruans have a strong sense of family and we are well aware that you are far from your families and we understand the pain this must cause you on a daily basis," he said.

"I wish to assure you that Nauru will welcome your families if they are able to visit you and we will facilitate this to the extent possible.

"We have also provided a facility to issue refugee travel documents for you."

### ***'You are our welcome guests'***

The tone of the message is markedly conciliatory, particularly in light of comments made by Immigration Minister Peter Dutton, and Nauru's President Baron Waqa in recent days.

Both have taken aim at refugee advocates, saying they are making the situation on the island worse by giving refugees false hope that they will one day come to Australia.

The statement also comes amid safety concerns in the Nauruan community.

At least one school closed early on Tuesday after rumours of a bomb threat spread across the island.

The Government of Nauru did not comment on whether a threat had been made, but local parents on the island confirmed that a school had been closed down.

In his statement, Mr Adeang called for unity between Nauruans and the refugees.

"I must ask you to recognise and respect the fact that this is our home, our beloved nation, our Pleasant Island, and that you are our welcome guests," he said.

"It is our hope and our prayer that we can work together to ensure that we can live safely and harmoniously together in Nauru, not as separate communities but as one community under one God."

<http://www.abc.net.au/news/2016-05-06/nauru-border-chief-pleads-refugees-to-use-time-constructively/7389418>

## **11. MEDIA RELEASE: Another Nauru suicide attempt**

Monday May 2, 2016  
Refugee Action Coalition  
Ian Rintoul  
mobile 0417 275 712

A 21 year-old Somali female refugee, Hadon, has set fire to herself on Nauru.

She is presently at the Nauru hospital. The Refugee Action Coalition understands that an air ambulance has already been called to medivac Hadon to Australia.

Witnesses say she is badly burned - saying all her clothes have been burned off. One report says she has suffered burns at least as bad as Omid.

Hadon was one of three refugees snatched by Border Force office at 3.00am from the Brisbane Immigration Transit Accommodation last Wednesday morning, 27 April.

She was carried bodily out of the detention centre by Border Force officers.

The removals came in the early hours following the news that the PNG Supreme Court had found that the Manus detention centre was unlawful.

Hadon was brought to Australia in November last year - after suffering a serious head injury. People who knew her did not believe she had recovered from the injury.

"This is another self-harm attempt that is Peter Dutton's responsibility," said Ian Rintoul, spokesperson for the Refugee Action Coalition. "A vulnerable young woman who needed protection was a victim of a spiteful removal. She has been sent to the toxic environment that the Minister has created on Nauru. Tragically this was entirely predictable."

A crowd of refugees has already gathered outside the hospital.

For more information contact Ian Rintoul 0417 275 712

## **12. Refugee fighting for life in Nauru hospital after setting herself alight**

ABC News Online  
By political reporters Dan Conifer and Jane Norman  
First posted Mon 2 May 2016, 5:17pm  
Updated Mon 2 May 2016, 6:34pm

A 21-year-old Somali refugee has set herself alight on Nauru in what is the second attempted self-immolation on the island in a week.

The Government of Nauru has issued a statement saying the woman suffered critical injuries and is being treated at the Nauru hospital by Australian doctors.

However, it has requested an emergency evacuation.

In its statement, the Nauruan Government said it was "distressed" by what it described as a dreadful act and suggested refugee advocates, Australian politicians and human rights lawyers were in part to blame for giving the refugees false hope.

"These actions are purely and simply being taken because they believe that political protests will influence the Australian Government and possibly help them gain entry to Australia," it said.

"The Government of Nauru calls on all who care about these people to work with us in sending the message to refugees on Nauru that such drastic actions will not work, and to refrain from such protests."

Refugee advocates said the young Somali refugee was one of three people returned to Nauru last week after receiving medical treatment in Australia.

The incident comes less than a week after a male Iranian refugee died after setting himself alight on Nauru.

Omid Masoumali, 23, set himself on fire last Wednesday in front of visiting United Nations representatives before dying on Friday in a Brisbane hospital.

A spokesman for the Department of Immigration and Border Protection said they were "aware" of the latest incident.

"The Department is supporting the Government of Nauru to identify appropriate medical treatment options," he said.

<http://www.abc.net.au/news/2016-05-02/second-refugee-sets-themselves-alight-on-nauru/7377710>

### **13. Second refugee sets themselves alight on Nauru**

The young woman, believed to be Somali, has severe burns and is being treated in the Nauruan hospital, according to sources on the island

The Guardian  
Helen Davidson and Ben Doherty  
Monday 2 May 2016 20.10 AEST

A young refugee woman from Somalia has set herself alight on Nauru, just days after a 23-year-old man, Omid, died of injuries sustained in a similar act.

It comes amid moves by the immigration department to shift detainees out to other mainland facilities, and police efforts to recapture an escapee from a Darwin detention centre.

And Omid's widow on Monday told Guardian Australia that she is being kept in a Brisbane hotel by immigration authorities, denied access to a lawyer and sedated.

The name of the young woman who self-immolated on Monday is Hadon, sometimes also written as Hodan, and she is 21 years old. Her suicide attempt on Monday afternoon, at OPC1 in the Nauru detention centre, has been confirmed by senior department staff.

According to several sources on the island, she is severely burned, and is currently in the Nauruan hospital. An Australian medical team specialising in trauma treatment is reportedly on the island and treating the woman.

"One of the witness who saw her said the situation is much worse than Omid," said the source. Other refugees have been stopped from entering the hospital, but expressed concern that she be medically evacuated out soon after accusations of delays in treating Omid.

Hadon is one of three detainees returned to Nauru last week after receiving medical care in Australia for injuries sustained in a motorcycle accident late last year.

Last Tuesday morning she was forcibly removed by Border Force officers from the Brisbane Immigration Transit Accommodation.

The government of Nauru said it was "distressed that refugees are attempting such dreadful acts in order to attempt to influence the Australian Government's immigration policies."

The past week has seen significant changes and events within Australia's immigration regime. The mood in both offshore processing centres has become increasingly distressed after the announced closure of the Manus Island facility after Papua New Guinea's supreme court ruled it illegal.

On the mainland, Northern Territory police revealed a 27-year-old male had escaped from Darwin's Wickham Point detention centre.

Police said the man, Amit Hamal, had absconded from a "scheduled outing". He was apprehended in Darwin city later on Monday.

It comes on the day authorities began a sudden transfer of detainees to other mainland detention centres on Monday.

Detainees, believed to be from both the family and single men's compounds, were told to report to appointments with immigration on Monday morning. There, at least some were told they would be transferred to other mainland detention centres in the next few days.

Detainees were given a luggage limit of one 20kg bag each for their possessions, and were to be transferred by charter flight. As well as housing a number of long-term detainees, Wickham Point is also used as a transfer facility between mainland and offshore centres, and as detention for people brought from offshore facilities to receive Australian medical treatment.

The department of immigration did not respond to questions on the Wickham Point transfer.

Catherine Stubberfield, spokesperson for UNHCR's Regional Representation in Canberra, said there was "no doubt that the current policy of offshore processing and prolonged detention is immensely harmful".

"There are approximately 2000 very vulnerable refugees and asylum-seekers on Manus Island and Nauru. These people have already been through a great deal, many have fled war and persecution, some have already suffered trauma. Despite commendable efforts by the Governments of Papua New Guinea and Nauru, arrangements in both countries have proved completely untenable.

Stubberfield said the mental health and physical wellbeing of people held in detention had deteriorated over time.

"The consensus among medical experts is that conditions of detention and offshore processing do immense damage to physical and mental health. UNHCR's principal concern today is that these refugees and asylum-seekers are immediately moved to humane conditions with adequate support and services to prevent further unnecessary suffering."

The UNHCR conducts regular monitoring visits to offshore detention sites, including seven visits to Nauru since it was re-opened in 2012. UNHCR staff were present when Omid set himself alight last Wednesday, though he had not been interviewed by the UNHCR or doctors accompanying the mission.

Stubberfield said UNHCR staff were deeply saddened by Omid's death.

<http://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/may/02/second-refugee-sets-themselves-alight-on-nauru>

## **14. Somali refugee in critical condition after setting herself alight on Nauru**

The 21-year-old woman has been flown to hospital in Brisbane and follows the self-immolation death of an Iranian man

The Guardian  
Ben Doherty and Helen Davidson  
Tuesday 3 May 2016 07.11 AEST

The young Somali woman who set herself alight on Nauru – the second refugee in a week to do so – has been taken to Australia by air ambulance, but her situation remains critical.

Hodan, 21, doused herself and set herself alight inside the OPC1 section of the detention centre on Nauru.

According to reports, she suffered severe burns to most of her body. One person reported "all of her clothes were burned off".

Another source said: "One of the witnesses who saw her said the situation is much worse than Omid," a reference to 23-year-old Omid Masoumali, who died last week after self-immolating on Nauru.

Other refugees were prevented by police from entering the hospital to see Hodan (spelled Hadon on her immigration department records) but said that she must be medically evacuated as quickly as possible after accusations of delays in treating Masoumali.

An air ambulance arrived overnight on Nauru to transport Hodan to Brisbane.

The incident will increase the pressure on the Australian government to improve conditions on Nauru and at its other offshore detention centre on Manus Island in Papua New Guinea.

Despite Labor supporting the government's policy of refusing settlement for refugees arriving by illegal boats, the party's immigration spokesman Richard Marles said it was leaving people without hope.

Prime minister Malcolm Turnbull "must urgently seek a viable agreement to resolve the fate of people on Manus Island and Nauru", Marles said on Tuesday.

Hodan was forcibly returned to Nauru only last Wednesday. She was seriously injured in a motorcycle accident on Nauru last November, and was brought to Australia for medical treatment.

In the early hours of the morning last Wednesday, Australian Border Force guards carried her out of the Brisbane immigration transit accommodation (Bitu) holding her by her arms and legs as she screamed to be allowed to stay.

Sources on the island say Hodan's self-immolation was her second attempt at suicide since being returned to the island.

Hodan had been held on Nauru for three years before she was moved to Brisbane. Friends described her as a "gentle soul" who had been "destroyed" by her time in detention.

Masoumali set himself alight at Nibok refugee settlement on Nauru last Wednesday in the presence of representatives from the United Nations.

Video footage shot on a mobile phone, which Guardian Australia has chosen not to publish, shows him dousing himself in accelerant and shouting: "This is how tired we are; this action will prove how exhausted we are. I cannot take it any more".

He then sets himself alight.

Masoumali's widow, also a refugee, has been critical of the delay in getting him care on Nauru. She says it was hours before he was given painkillers. It was more than 22 hours before he was taken to a Brisbane hospital.

Video footage of Masoumali at Nauru hospital shows him clearly conscious as he paces up and down while screaming – with severe burns apparent to his arms, legs, chest and back – while distressed friends plead for him to be given assistance.

A second clip shows doctors and nurses struggling to administer painkillers, as Omid, still standing, continues to scream. People watching nearby are vomiting.

Masoumali's widow told Guardian Australia her husband was not given a sheet or a place to lie down, and that the hospital "didn't even have a clean syringe".

"Staff in Nauru hospital couldn't help Omid in any way because they were unequipped," she said. "A lack of proper equipment and facilities was the reason that staff couldn't help and treat Omid in the Nauru hospital."

On Monday, she said she was being kept in a Brisbane hotel by immigration authorities, denied access to a lawyer and sedated.

The Nauru government has said Masoumali received "the highest level of care".

But Ian Rintoul from the Refugee Action Coalition said there was "an epidemic of self-harm at Nauru"

"A vulnerable young woman who needed protection was a victim of a spiteful removal. She has been sent to the toxic environment that the minister has created on Nauru. Tragically this was entirely predictable."

Current Australian government policy – support by both major parties – mandates that no asylum seeker who arrives, or attempts to arrive, by boat will ever settle in the country. Instead they are sent to the two offshore processing facilities on Manus Island in Papua New Guinea, or Nauru, ostensibly for processing, followed by repatriation or resettlement in a third country.

However, in practice, it has resulted in indefinite detention, with fewer than five resettlements in Cambodia and PNG (Nauru does not offer permanent resettlement) from more than 2,000 people in detention.

New Zealand has offered to take refugees, but Australia has refused this, saying it was a "back door" to entering Australia.

Last week the PNG supreme court ruled the detention on Manus Island was illegal and unconstitutional, and its government announced closure of the Manus Island facility. Since then, the Australian government has been scrambling for a solution, and detainees in both centres have become increasingly distressed amid the confusion.

The United Nations has said Australia's offshore detention regime is acutely damaging, and called for refugees and asylum seekers to be removed from their current detention.

Catherine Stubberfield, spokesperson for UNHCR's regional representation in Canberra, said there was "no doubt that the current policy of offshore processing and prolonged detention is immensely harmful".

"There are approximately 2,000 very vulnerable refugees and asylum seekers on Manus Island and Nauru. These people have already been through a great deal, many have fled war and persecution, some have already suffered trauma. Despite commendable efforts by the governments of Papua New Guinea and Nauru, arrangements in both countries have proved completely untenable."

Stubberfield said the mental health and physical wellbeing of people held in detention had deteriorated over time.

"The consensus among medical experts is that conditions of detention and offshore processing do immense damage to physical and mental health. UNHCR's principal concern today is that these refugees and asylum seekers are immediately moved to humane conditions with adequate support and services to prevent further unnecessary suffering."

The government of Nauru said it was "distressed that refugees are attempting such dreadful acts in order to attempt to influence the Australian government's immigration policies".

It said refugee advocates, Australian politicians and human rights lawyers should "work with us in sending the message to refugees on Nauru that such drastic actions will not work, and to refrain from such protests".

"Refugee advocates must stop giving refugees and asylum seekers on Nauru false hope and stirring up these protests."

Save the Children's chief executive Paul Ronalds said Australia needed to find permanent and workable solutions for those held on Nauru and Manus, who were being damaged by the ongoing uncertainty over their futures.

"We know first-hand from our time on Nauru that prolonged and indefinite detention, and the uncertainty associated with a lack of permanent resettlement options for refugees on Nauru, causes serious harm. Recent events on both Manus and Nauru demonstrate the unsustainability of present arrangements, and that further serious and life-threatening incidents are inevitable."

<http://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2016/may/03/somali-refugee-in-critical-condition-after-setting-herself-alight-on-nauru>

## **15. Nauru refugee who set herself alight arrives in Brisbane for treatment**

ABC News Online

First posted Tue 3 May 2016, 7:57am

Updated Tue 3 May 2016, 8:57am

A Somali refugee who set herself alight in the Nauru detention centre has arrived in Brisbane for treatment.

Hodan Yasin, 21, suffered critical injuries on Monday, and was treated at the Nauru hospital by Australian doctors.

She was flown to Brisbane this morning, and taken to the Royal Brisbane and Women's Hospital for treatment.

It was the second attempted self-immolation on the island in a week, after Iranian refugee Omid Masoumali, 23, set himself on fire last Wednesday in front of visiting UNHCR representatives.

He suffered third-degree burns to most of his torso and was airlifted to Brisbane for treatment but died in hospital.

The ABC understands he had been on Nauru for three years.

Refugee Action Coalition spokesman Ian Rintoul said he feared more asylum seekers would hurt themselves.

"It's becoming very obvious that there is a whole population on Nauru which are in exactly the same circumstances and unless those circumstances change then there are going to be more instances of that," he said.

Refugee advocates said Ms Yasin was one of three people returned to Nauru last week after receiving medical treatment in Australia.

<http://www.abc.net.au/news/2016-05-03/nauru-detention-centre-burns-victim-arrives-brisbane-treatment/7378242>

## 16. Nauru asylum seekers being 'encouraged' to self-harm by advocates, Immigration Minister Peter Dutton says

ABC News Online

First posted Tue 3 May 2016, 9:28am

Updated Tue 3 May 2016, 10:10am

Immigration Minister Peter Dutton has hit out at "advocates and others" who he believes are pressuring refugees to "behave in a certain way", saying the Federal Government will not be persuaded to change its border protection policies.

Twenty-one-year-old Somali refugee Hodan Yasin has been transferred to Australia in a critical condition after setting herself on fire on Monday.

It follows the death of Iranian asylum seeker Omid Masoumali, who also self-immolated on the island.

Speaking in Canberra this morning, Mr Dutton accused advocates of providing false hope to those have been held in offshore detention.

"I have previously expressed my frustration and anger at advocates and others who are in contact with those in regional processing centres and who are encouraging some of these people to behave in a certain way, believing that that pressure exerted on the Australian Government will see a change in our policy in relation to our border protection measures," Mr Dutton said.

"They can oppose Government policy and espouse a cause for open borders, but that is not the policy of this Government, and no action advocates or those in regional processing countries take will cause the Government to deviate from its course."

He said Ms Yasin was receiving the "utmost care" after being flown from Nauru to a Brisbane hospital.

"It is of grave concern that this person would resort to such an extreme act of self-harm," he said.

And he accused asylum seeker advocates of contributing to the increased tensions in Nauru.

"The behaviours have intensified in recent times and as we see, they have now turned to extreme acts with terrible consequences," he said.

### ***This is not a complaint about living conditions: Dutton***

Mr Dutton also denied the recent protests are in response to living conditions on Nauru and Manus Island.

"There is not a complaint about the living conditions, the medical services, the education, the 300 people or so who are employed on Nauru, the 30-odd who have started up small businesses," he said.

"These complaints are largely because people want to come to Australia.

"I can understand that people have paid thousands of dollars to a people smuggler and they want to come to our country."

He also confirmed Ms Yasin had previously been transferred to Australia and received medical assistance, before being cleared to be returned to Nauru.

Greens immigration spokesman Sarah Hanson-Young said Ms Yasin had been "driven to despair" after being forced to go back to Nauru.

"The situation on Nauru is spiralling dangerously out of control," she said in a statement.

"Malcom Turnbull must show these people some decency and give them hope because the brutality of this policy is killing people."

<http://www.abc.net.au/news/2016-05-03/dutton-says-asylum-seekers-encouraged-to-self-harm-by-advocates/7378938>

## 17. Peter Dutton accuses refugee advocates of encouraging suicide on Nauru

Campaigners say immigration minister's comments are 'offensive and demeaning'

The Guardian  
Ben Doherty  
Tuesday 3 May 2016 12.54 AEST

The immigration minister, Peter Dutton, has blamed refugee advocates for the suicide attempts on Nauru and Manus, alleging they are encouraging detainees to self-harm in the hope of getting to Australia.

A second refugee, Hodan Yasi, self-immolated on Nauru overnight and is in a Brisbane hospital in a critical condition.

Pressed on his allegation, Dutton offered no examples of refugee supporters advocating acts of self-harm, but said his office received "advice" and "intelligence" that it was occurring.

"There is a lot of publicly available information in relation to some of the social media messaging as well," he said.

"I have previously expressed my frustration and anger at advocates and others who are in contact with those in regional processing centres and who are encouraging some of these people to behave in a certain way, believing that that pressure exerted on the Australian government will see a change in our policy in relation to our border protection measures," Dutton said.

The government would not be swayed by public pressure, protests, or acts of self-harm.

"We are not going to change those policies, and the advocates, by providing false hope to these people, really [are] to be condemned," he said. "They can provide offers of support, that is reasonable. But to provide advice otherwise is very dangerous."

Ian Rintoul, a long-time refugee advocate and spokesman for the Refugee Action Coalition, said he had "never seen any evidence, not a single example" of advocates encouraging self-harm.

"The opposite is true," he said. "It's the advocates who are always urging people, people who are desperate, not to harm themselves."

Rintoul said Dutton's comments were "offensive and demeaning", and that they were without foundation.

"It's clear Dutton does not have a shred of evidence for what he's saying. He offered no evidence at all.

"This is a desperate act by the government trying to deflect blame for situation they have created."

And he said the government's hardline stance on offshore processing would only contribute to the helplessness felt by those in detention.

"I think Dutton's dismissive attitude to these people's despair, is more likely to create the kinds of situations he says he is trying to avoid."

Yasi is the second refugee on Nauru to self-immolate in the past week. Reports from Nauru suggest she has severe burns to 70% of her body, with her upper body and face most badly affected.

Australia's immigration department says Yasi is 21 years old. However, sources on Nauru say she is only 19, having been sent to Nauru as a 16-year-old child three years ago. Department files also misspell her name as Hadon.

She set herself alight in protest late on Monday afternoon in the OPC1 compound of the Nauru detention centre.

Yasi was returned to Nauru less than a week ago, having been brought to Australia last November after being seriously injured in a motorcycle accident.

Early last Wednesday morning, she was forcibly dragged out of the Brisbane immigration transit accommodation by guards. Fellow detainees say she screamed as she was carried away.

Last Wednesday, a 23-year-old Iranian refugee, Omid Masoumali, died two days after setting himself alight at Nibok refugee settlement on Nauru, in the presence of representatives from the United Nations.

Video footage shot on a mobile phone, which Guardian Australia has chosen not to publish, shows him dousing himself in accelerant and shouting: "This is how tired we are; this action will prove how exhausted we are. I cannot take it any more."



Masoumali's widow, also a refugee, has criticised the delay in getting him care on Nauru. She says it was hours before he was given painkillers. It was more than 22 hours before he was taken to a Brisbane hospital.

Video footage of Masoumali at Nauru hospital shows him clearly conscious as he paces up and down while screaming – with severe burns apparent to his arms, legs, chest and back – while distressed friends plead for him to be given assistance.

A second clip shows doctors and nurses struggling to administer painkillers, as Masoumali, still standing, continues to scream. People watching nearby are vomiting.

Masoumali's widow told Guardian Australia her husband was not given a sheet or a place to lie down, and that the hospital "didn't even have a clean syringe".

"Staff in Nauru hospital couldn't help Omid in any way because they were unequipped," she said. "A lack of proper equipment and facilities was the reason that staff couldn't help and treat Omid in the Nauru hospital."

On Monday she said she was being kept in a Brisbane hotel by immigration authorities, denied access to a lawyer and sedated.

The Nauru government has said Masoumali received "the highest level of care".

The former prime minister, Tony Abbott, won the 2013 federal election on a primary campaign platform of "stop the boats".

Since then Labor has been assiduous in appearing in lockstep with the Coalition on asylum seeker policy. However, in recent days at least four Labor members have spoken out against the offshore detention regime.

The retiring MP Melissa Parke told a caucus meeting on Tuesday morning "great harm is being done to people on Manus Island and Nauru".

The opposition leader, Bill Shorten, said: "If we get the chance to form government we will make it clear through our actions we don't support indefinite detention; the people concerned will be resettled in third countries."

Another member praised Shorten and opposition immigration spokesman Richard Marles's handling of asylum seekers, saying Labor should "always protect the interests of the most vulnerable".

Shorten responded Labor had to have policies that avoided drownings at sea and that treated people within our care decently.

<http://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2016/may/03/peter-dutton-accuses-refugee-advocates-of-encouraging-suicide-on-nauru>

## **18. MEDIA RELEASE: Dutton lies, refugees die**

Tuesday May 3, 2016  
Refugee Action Coalition  
Ian Rintoul  
mobile 0417 275 713

Despite Immigration Minister's attempts to deflect the blame, it is the government that is responsible for the appalling conditions they have created on Nauru.

Dutton even created his own "children overboard" moment by suggesting there was threat from refugees to 'assets' on Nauru.

Dutton boasts about the money invested in a new hospital on Nauru, but that hospital is not functioning. Omid and Hodan were treated in the shockingly unsatisfactory conditions of the old hospital. Even basic medical supplies were not available at the hospital to properly treat Omid.

"The government itself is playing a dangerous game with the lives of asylum seekers and refugees - in Australia and on Nauru. Offshore processing and the government's mismanagement of the situation is costing lives," said Ian Rintoul, spokesperson for the Refugee Action Coalition.

"Peter Dutton does not have a shred of evidence that advocates encourage refugees to self-harm. This is the same line Scott Morrison tried about the Save the Children workers in 2014 and that was shown to be completely false. But Dutton has learned nothing.

"His dismissive attitude to the distress of the asylum seekers and refugees on Nauru will only put more people at risk. He should seek the advice of mental health experts before he makes such ill-informed pronouncements."

But there is plenty of evidence that the Department of Immigration and Border Force, IHMS and mental health workers in Australia and Nauru has failed even a basic duty of care to people under its control.

Hodan was under high security 24-hour watch in the Brisbane Transit Accommodation when she was snatched by Border Force officers last Wednesday morning, because she was considered to be "at risk." In the two weeks she was removed from Brisbane, she made a number of self-harm attempts.

Hodan's removal was reckless in the extreme, and directly contributed to her suicide attempt on Nauru.

On the very night that Hodan was returned to Nauru, she swallowed washing powder at the IHMS clinic, OPC 1. She has been in OPC 12 under "high watch" since she was returned to Nauru.

"Hodan was a known suicide risk. It is Peter Dutton, IHMS and mental health workers who have to explain how Hodan was able to leave OPC 1 and attempt self-immolation at the bus stop," said Rintoul. "It is Peter Dutton and offshore processing that robbed Omid and Hodan of their hope. To belittle her distress and her need for help has condemned the Minister and the policy and exposed how little care there is for those who need it."

For more information contact Ian Rintoul 0417 275 713

## **19. Peter Dutton says news organisations are 'prolonging the difficulty' of asylum seekers through coverage**

ABC News Online

By political reporter Stephanie Anderson

Posted Thu 5 May 2016, 11:43am

Immigration Minister Peter Dutton has hit out at the media over its coverage of asylum seekers and refugees, saying some news organisations need to "reassess their approach".

Earlier this week, Mr Dutton criticised advocates, who he believed were pressuring refugees to "behave in a certain way".

On Thursday, he said some news organisations were making the situation worse.

"There are some media outlets in this country who need to reassess their approach to these matters because again, like advocates, holding false hope out to people that somehow, through different resistance methods, that they're going to come to Australia, they are wrong and they are frankly, I think, prolonging the difficulty of these people," he said.

"They may think that they're smart and well intentioned, but they're not."

Mr Dutton said that while he was saddened by the self-immolations on Nauru, he believed the Government had the right policy settings.

"When I've spoken to the sailors and the ABF staff who have pulled drowned children from the sea, they've pulled body parts from the sea that have been attacked by sharks, that upsets me," he said.

"If you think that I'm going to allow people smugglers to get back into business and allow men, women and children to drown at sea again, then you well and truly underestimate how determined I am."

His comments came as another outgoing Labor MP took aim at the Government's asylum seeker policy, saying that Australia had "hardened its hearts".

Former speaker Anna Burke targeted the policy in her valedictory speech on Thursday, saying that while she was not a policy expert, she knew when "something's wrong".

"Let us turn back while there's still time," she told the chamber.

"These are people so traumatized that some are setting themselves on fire."

Ms Burke's comments echo those made by outgoing Labor MP Melissa Parke on Wednesday, who described Australia's offshore immigration detention network as a "festering wound that is killing people".

<http://www.abc.net.au/news/2016-05-05/peter-dutton-says-media-should-reassess-approach-on-refugees/7387194>

## 20. Omid Masoumali, refugee who died after setting himself on fire, 'suffered without medical care'

ABC Radio CAF - AM

By Peter Lloyd

Posted Mon 2 May 2016, 9:43am

An Iranian refugee who died after setting himself on fire at the Nauru detention centre was without doctor's care for two hours at the medical facility and lay in agony for a further eight hours before morphine was administered, his wife says.

She says it then took 24 hours for a medical airlift team to arrive in Nauru, a six-hour flight from the mainland.

Video emerged last week showing Omid Masoumali screaming in agony at the Nauru medical facility, raising questions about the standard of medical care given to him after he set himself on fire in front of three Canberra-based UNHCR staff last Wednesday.

Mr Masoumali died in a Brisbane hospital on Friday.

Nana Masoumali relayed her concerns about her husband's treatment to Dr Barri Phatarfod, from Doctors for Refugees, by phone as the ordeal unfolded.

"That situation yet again exposes the lie that people who are in offshore detention centres are given the same treatment as they are in Australia," Dr Phatarfod told the ABC.

"When have you seen a burn victim with such a severe level of burn, some reports say 80 per cent, some reports say 90 per cent — when do you see a burn victim running around a hospital screaming in agony for several hours after the initial event?"

A coronial inquest will need to establish from medical records the precise time of medical interventions.

By Ms Masoumali account, doctors struggled into the night to get lines into his body to restore fluids.

Dr Phatarfod said that because of that, Mr Masoumali's body began to fail.

"But anyone looking at this person in the emergency department should have ordered a medivac within 15 minutes," he said.

### ***Immigration department says it 'acted promptly'***

The medical company that operates the clinic on Nauru would not say when the doctors made the decision to seek a medivac.

CareFlight, which operates the air ambulance, said it was unable to provide information regarding the evacuation.

When asked about the time taken to transport Mr Masoumali to Brisbane, a spokesman for the Department of Immigration and Border Protection said: "As soon as the department became aware of the incident, it acted promptly to request an air ambulance in the event the man required transport to Australia.

"The man was severely injured and was in a critical condition at the Republic of Nauru Hospital.

"An air ambulance was the most appropriate form of transport given the extent of the injuries sustained.

"The most rapidly deployable air ambulance was used to attend this emergency."

Dr Phatarfod said Mr Masoumali's condition was dramatically worse by the time he arrived in Brisbane.

"He did have profound hypoxia, lack of oxygen going to not only his vital organs, his heart, his brain, he did have a heart attack as a result of hypoxia," he said.

Mr Masoumali's body will be flown back to Iran.

It is understood Ms Masoumali is in an immigration facility in Brisbane, about to be sent back to Nauru.

<http://www.abc.net.au/news/2016-05-02/omid-masoumali-without-proper-medical-care-for-hours,-says-wife/7374884>

## 21. 'People are angry': Nauru refugees blame Turnbull government for man's death

The Age  
May 1, 2016 - 4:06PM  
Nicole Hasham

A close friend of a refugee who died after setting himself alight on Nauru has slammed a delay in specialist medical treatment, claiming the Turnbull government is responsible for the man's death.

The criticism comes amid doubts over the operation of the government's offshore detention facilities, after the company that is expected to take over the current contractor, Broadspectrum, ruled out future involvement in the controversial centres.

A 23-year-old Iranian refugee died on Friday at a Brisbane hospital after waiting more than a day to be airlifted from Nauru after setting himself alight. It is understood his name was Omid.

A fellow refugee on Nauru who identified himself as Arman said he was one of Omid's best friends. He said refugees were angered by the death "because Omid could be alive if they sent him to Australia more soon".

"It's the government's fault, the government killed Omid, they kept him here in Nauru for 26 hours. People are angry," Arman said.

Omid's wife is thought to have witnessed the incident and travelled to Australia to be by her husband's bedside.

Arman remembered Omid as "a kind man, [he liked to] socialise, he had lots of friends around the island. He was totally a good person.

"Most of the time we were trying to be happy. We were always discussing our future, what would happen to us and how long we would stay in Nauru," Arman said.

When news of the death broke on Nauru, refugees "were crying and shouting, everyone is upset," he said, adding, "I want Australian people to pray for him."

A spokesman for the Department of Immigration and Border Protection said it "acted promptly to request an air ambulance in the event the man required transport to Australia".

He said the man was severely injured and his condition in hospital on Nauru was critical, adding that "the most rapidly deployable air ambulance was used to attend this emergency".

Spanish company Ferrovial is expected to take over Broadspectrum, which provides garrison and welfare services in Australia's offshore detention centres.

This follows an announcement by the Papua New Guinean government last week that the Manus Island detention centre would close following a court ruling that the facility was illegal and breached the human rights of detainees.

The Broadspectrum contract has been extended until February next year. In a statement on Friday, Ferrovial said the detention centres "will not form part of its services offering in the future" – casting serious doubts over Broadspectrum's involvement once the contract expires.

Broadspectrum referred inquiries to Ferrovial, from which comment has been sought.

A department spokesman said it expected Broadspectrum would meet the obligations of its current contract.

Refugee advocacy groups GetUp! and No Business in Abuse say they are meeting Ferrovial in Madrid this week to demand the company "immediately walk away from the illegal offshore camps".

<http://www.theage.com.au/federal-politics/political-news/people-are-angry-nauru-refugees-blame-turnbull-government-for-mans-death-20160501-goj8s5.html>

## 22. Widow of refugee who set himself alight 'being kept in hotel and denied a lawyer'

Woman says she is unable to call her family and officials are trying to convince her to return to Iran, but an immigration spokesperson denies the allegations

The Guardian  
Helen Davidson  
Monday 2 May 2016 17:07 AEST

The widow of Omid, a 23-year-old refugee who set himself alight on Nauru, says she is being kept in a small Brisbane hotel, told to stay away from the windows, and sedated if she starts to cry too much.

The woman, whose husband died on Friday from injuries sustained when he set himself alight in front of UN representatives at a refugee settlement, also said she has been denied a lawyer and is unable to call her family, and that immigration officials are trying to convince her to return home to Iran.

“You know I’m grieving and I need to cry but as soon as I want to cry they give me pills or injections to keep me calm,” she said in a recorded message sent to Guardian Australia and interpreted. “They don’t want my voice to be raised or heard by others. They want me to be emotionless and inactive.”

Omid was medivaced from Nauru almost 24 hours after he set his clothes on fire. His wife has blamed the delay – in both medical care on the island and in transferring him out – for his death.

On Friday she told Guardian Australia her husband had gone hours without seeing a doctor when he was first brought to the Nauru hospital, and that he couldn’t be given intravenous pain relief.

Omid’s wife, who did not want her name printed, was brought to Brisbane to be alongside her husband in hospital, before he died. She is now believed to be in the company of a friend and immigration guards at a Brisbane hotel. Guardian Australia understands she is receiving medical care at the Brisbane Immigration Transit Accommodation.

“They are keeping me in a small hotel and no one is supposed to know about my location. I have to be careful even when I walk by the windows, so not to be observed from outside. They have told me, if anyone finds out your whereabouts we will put more restrictions on you. I’m not even allowed to yell or cry.”

She said she had sought access to a lawyer, but it was denied to her. “They told me because I don’t have a right visa I’m not eligible for a lawyer,” she said.

The ABC reported on Monday morning the Australian government has asked Omid’s family to foot the \$17,000 bill to send his body back to Iran, but Guardian Australia understands the repatriation is still being discussed.

A friend of Omid’s wife told Guardian Australia immigration officials had also tried to convince her to return to Iran with her husband’s body. She is, just as Omid was, a recognised refugee whose claims of persecution in her home country were found to be valid.

The Department of Immigration and Border Protection denied all allegations put to it by Guardian Australia. A spokeswoman said the department was providing Omid’s wife with “access to a range of support services to help her through this difficult time”.

She said the department did not comment on the medical care of individuals, and - in response to questions from Guardian Australia on the conditions in which Omid’s wife is being held – the “remaining claims are untrue”.

Doctors for Refugees has sought access to Omid’s wife, but has not yet gained approval from the immigration department.

Dr Barri Phatarfod, co-founder of the group, said sedation of distressed people in immigration detention was common.

“If someone is distraught, in distress, or threatening self-harm, they’re under this quite ominous category called non-compliance,” Phatarfod said.

“So many people we’ve seen who are deemed non-compliant ... it results in their sedation.

“We’re in touch with a lot of people on Manus Island, and they say when someone has completely had enough ... they get sedated.”

Omid and his wife were living in Nibok settlement on Nauru when Omid self-immolated in front of UN officials from Canberra.

UNHCR were on Nauru conducting a monitoring visit, focussing on the “seriously deteriorated mental health of the transferred asylum-seekers and refugees” at both sites, a spokeswoman said.

A video, seen by Guardian Australia but which we have chosen not to publish, shows Omid standing in a clearing, soaked in a liquid believed to be accelerant. He shouts “this is how tired we are, this action will prove how exhausted we are. I cannot take it anymore,” according to a witness.

Bystanders raced to tackle Omid and smother the flames, and another video shows him in the Nauru hospital.

His wife told Guardian Australia it took two hours for a doctor to come to see him, and that he wasn’t give a sheet to lay on.

"Staff in Nauru hospital couldn't help Omid in any way because they were unequipped," she said. "A lack of proper equipment and facilities was the reason that staff couldn't help and treat Omid in the Nauru hospital."

Omid suffered cardiac arrest during the night, but wasn't flown to Brisbane until the next day. His wife said doctors told her he was brain dead before he arrived. He died on Friday afternoon, and his death will be referred to the Queensland coroner.

<http://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2016/may/02/widow-of-refugee-who-set-himself-alight-being-kept-in-hotel-and-denied-a-lawyer>

## **23. Omid Masoumali set himself on fire after UNHCR told him he would remain on Nauru, asylum seekers say**

ABC Radio CAF - PM

By Michael Edwards and Peter Lloyd

Posted Mon 2 May 2016, 4:03pm

More asylum seekers have come forward to confirm an Iranian refugee who died after setting himself on fire, did so after hearing he would remain on the island for another decade.

Omid Masoumali died on Friday in a Brisbane hospital, two days after he set himself on fire in front of visiting officials from the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR).

He had been on the island for three years and was requesting to be sent to a third country, but several asylum seekers said his hopes were dashed following a meeting with the UNHCR officials.

Eli Shakiba is an Iranian refugee on Nauru. She was not at the meetings where asylum seekers and refugees were reportedly told they would remain on Nauru for 10 years, but said she had several friends who were.

She told PM their versions of what was said during the meetings were consistent.

"I heard they said 'You have to stay in Nauru for 10 years'. They came here to ask people 'What do you need here to stay in Nauru? What do you need?' I heard about my friends who met them," Ms Shakiba said.

Ms Shakiba also said at least three other detainees had attempted to take their own lives following meetings with the UNHCR last week.

"First one was a Somalian lady and second one an Iranian boy, and last night I heard about a Sri Lankan man who wanted to do that, but people found out and stopped him," Ms Shakiba said.

"First man who wanted to set himself in the fire, just was thinking about that and told someone 'I want to do that, and I'm next one' and people spoke to him and ask him to don't do that."

### ***Calls for clarification on claims refugees will remain on Nauru***

Greens Senator Sarah Hanson-Young said she was concerned about reports Mr Masoumali set himself on fire after hearing he would stay on Nauru for a further 10 years.

She called on the Government to clarify how long those who were found to be refugees would remain on the Pacific island nation.

"These are people who have had their claims assessed, they've been found to be refugees therefore they deserve to be looked after and given an opportunity to rebuild their lives," Ms Hanson-Young said.

"We shouldn't be having them languishing on Nauru even now, let alone for years and years to come, and the Government really has to clarify what their position here is."

Ms Hanson-Young said she was also concerned about reports Mr Masoumali's wife was being kept away from her family and friends, as well as having her phone confiscated.

Refugee advocates are worried the family could be left with the bill to send his body back to Iran for burial.

Ian Rintoul, from the Refugee Action Coalition, said in his experience the families were usually given the bill for repatriation.

"We are setting up an account so that people are going to be able to donate to we'll use it to cover the cost of repatriation of Omid's body if that's what's necessary," he said.

"But there are so many people who simply want to donate so the family, so there's some kind of compensation for Omid's life and for the rest of his family.

"We'll be using any money we get to help the family out."

<http://www.abc.net.au/news/2016-05-02/refugee-set-himself-on-fire-after-unhcr-meeting:-asylum-seekers/7377396>

## **24. Former NZ detainees suspected over Christmas Island riot could be extradited**

ABC News Online

By Jacob Kagi

Posted Fri 6 May 2016, 6:10pm

Former Christmas Island detention centre detainees who were deported to New Zealand after a large riot at the facility could be brought back to Australia to face criminal action over the incident.

Following last November's riot, which caused \$10 million in damage, several New Zealand detainees accused by authorities of being responsible for it were deported.

But the Australian Federal Police (AFP) has now confirmed it has contacted some of the former Christmas Island detainees and has sought assistance from its New Zealand counterparts.

"Requests for assistance from partner law enforcement agencies are common practice for matters such as this," an AFP spokesperson said.

One former detainee who has been contacted by authorities told Radio New Zealand he was fearful of what would happen.

"To me it looks like they want to, well they think we're involved in the riots there, and they're trying to get us and send us back to Australia to possibly do some [jail] time," he said.

At the time of the riot, Immigration Minister Peter Dutton vowed to punish those responsible for the incident and called them "some of the country's worst criminals".

Many of the people held on Christmas Island at the time were people who had their visas revoked after serving time in prison for serious offences.

<http://www.abc.net.au/news/2016-05-06/deported-christmas-island-detainees-could-be-brought-back/7392572>

## **25. Pontville Detention Centre near Hobart sold to mystery Tasmanian buyer**

ABC News Online

By Rosemary Bolger

Posted Fri 6 May 2016, 3:13pm

The Pontville Detention Centre has been sold to a mystery Tasmanian buyer almost three years after the last asylum seekers were released or transferred.

The Department of Defence confirmed the sale of the Pontville Small Arms Rifle Range complex, but will not reveal the sale price or the buyer's identity.

The 517-hectare site near Brighton was put on the market in September, and was re-advertised early this year.

Brighton Mayor Tony Foster had mixed feelings about the sale.

"In some ways, it's pleasing the process is finished," he said.

"In other ways, I would have liked to have seen it, of course, put to better use, particularly seeing as taxpayer money, something in the order of \$20 million, was spent there.

"Unfortunately, I think Tasmania missed out on a great opportunity to be able to utilise it."

The barrack-style buildings on site were converted into a detention centre in 2011 to house mostly young men, holding up to 350 at one stage.

### ***Buyer's identity withheld on Defence orders***

The last refugees were flown to other centres in September 2013 and it was formally closed the following year.

There have since been campaigns to re-open the centre to house detainees, as well as ideas to convert it into a low-security prison or detox centres for methamphetamine addicts.

Cr Foster has spoken to the new owner but said they have been instructed by Defence not to go public.

Pontville is listed on the Commonwealth Heritage List and also contains sensitive flora and fauna areas.

Under the council's planning scheme, agricultural uses are permitted.

"All indications are that the people that have bought it are not going to rush into anything," Cr Foster said.

"I'm hopeful that they will sit down with the council and work out what is the best for our community."

<http://www.abc.net.au/news/2016-05-06/pontville-detention-centre-sold-to-mystery-buyer/7391750>