

Project SafeCom News and Updates

Monday, 27 April 2015

Subscribe and become a member here: <http://www.safecom.org.au/ref-member.htm>

1. Australia 'public enemy number one' of UN climate talks, says Nobel laureate
2. Academic likens Lomborg appointment to putting Brian Burke in charge of economy
3. Jonathan Holmes: A chilling step closer to Australian secret police
4. 'Accountant of Auschwitz': I am morally complicit in murder of millions of Jews
5. Libya migrant boat sinking: Up to 700 feared dead as migrant ship capsizes in waters south of Italy
6. EU leaders discuss possible attacks on people smugglers
7. 'Tiny hearts': What the UK has been told about Australia's asylum seeker policy
8. Julian Burnside: 'Tiny hearts' and 'balls of steel'. This is what the world thinks of Australia
9. Conservative columnist Katie Hopkins reported to police over asylum seeker views
10. Follow Australia and ignore 'Mrs Lovejoys' on asylum seeker boats: Daniel Hannan
11. Tony Abbott urges Europe to adopt stronger border protection policies following migrant boat sinkings
12. Refugee crisis: Europe looks to Australia for answers
13. David Marr: Tony Abbott? He's too tough on immigration for me, says Nigel Farage
14. If Europe listens to Tony Abbott, the future for refugees will be cruel
15. 'Migrants are like cockroaches': Petition calls for The Sun columnist Katie Hopkins to be sacked
16. MEDIA RELEASE: Australia's turn-back policy adds to drowning risks in Europe
17. Stop the boats: Three words that shame the country, says ACTU boss Ged Kearney
18. VIDEO (Facebook): STOP THE BOATS
19. Bruce Haigh: If we were ever the lucky country, we aren't now
20. Gary Nunn: Politics and the Australian language
21. Lawyers seek to stop five-year-old with psychiatric illness being sent to Nauru
22. Legal action to stop 5yo asylum seeker being returned to Nauru
23. Peter Dutton mentally 'torturing' 5yo asylum seeker through Nauru detention, Sarah Hanson-Young says
24. Peter Dutton calls Greens senator 'repugnant' over claims he's 'torturing' child
25. Pressure mounts for Immigration Minister not to return girl with PTSD to Nauru
26. More than 100 organisations urge Government not to return asylum seekers to Nauru and Manus Island
27. Lawyer for 5yo girl with PTSD argues against her return to Nauru
28. Asylum seeker lawyers given Christmas Island access ahead of demolition plans
29. Lawyers gain access to 'dangerous' Christmas Island compound after judge dismisses 'contrived' refusal
30. Boy pleads with Q&A panel to stop deportation of friend with autism
31. Mother facing deportation over son's autism overwhelmed by public support
32. Asylum seekers returned to Vietnam by Australian Navy had claims assessed at sea, UNHCR says
33. Immigration officials screened Vietnamese asylum seekers aboard navy ship
34. Government accused of 'new low' amid silence over reports of Vietnamese boat turn-back
35. Peter Dutton hints at deal with Vietnam to accept return of asylum seekers
36. Fears returned Vietnamese asylum seekers are being grilled in police detention
37. Refugee transfer to Cambodia delayed by 'logistical issues', says Peter Dutton
38. Peter Dutton denies claims refugees are snubbing resettlement in Cambodia
39. UN refugee agency wants no part of Cambodia resettlement
40. Cambodia says no refugee arrivals imminent, contradicting Peter Dutton
41. Just one refugee on Nauru agrees to Cambodia resettlement
42. Iranian asylum seeker agrees to resettle in Cambodia from Nauru, refugee advocate's messages say
43. One refugee from Myanmar volunteers to leave Nauru for Cambodia, local media reports
44. One refugee on Nauru takes up resettlement offer, says Cambodian official
45. Nauru refugees who resist resettlement in Cambodia may get less assistance
46. Nauru refugees resettling in Cambodia; 'Numbers, flight details not finalised'
47. Peter Dutton in video plea to Nauru refugees to call 'Cambodia settlement hotline'
48. Refugees sent from Nauru to Cambodia may join others in lining up to leave
49. Resettlement offer to asylum seekers may have breached Cambodia deal
50. Four Nauru refugees who agreed to go to Cambodia wait to fly out
51. MEDIA RELEASE: Nauru refugees protest against Cambodia & offshore processing
52. MEDIA ALERT: Ahwazi Arabs to protest at Immigration Dept Canberra
53. Teenager charged with sex offences against child in detention appears in court: Immigration Department
54. Asylum children will face 'bleak fate' after deportation to Malaysia, says lawyer
55. Asylum seeker gets good behaviour bond

1. Australia 'public enemy number one' of UN climate talks, says Nobel laureate

Peter Doherty, Nobel laureate of medicine, says a clear message has emerged at an international symposium of experts in climate, economics and business

The Guardian

Melissa Davey

Saturday 25 April 2015 08.41 AEST

Australia is emerging as “public enemy number one” of the United Nations climate change negotiations to be held in Paris in December, according to a Nobel laureate of medicine speaking from a sustainability symposium in Hong Kong.

Prof Peter Doherty is representing Australia at the symposium, held every three years and which is being attended by 11 other laureates from around the world, who will sign a memorandum detailing their recommendations for making major cities sustainable.

The four-day symposium ends on Saturday afternoon, and Doherty said a clear message had emerged from his peers, who hold expertise across specialities including climate, economics and business.

“People are saying informally that Australia and Canada are emerging as public enemy number one for the Paris talks on climate,” Doherty said.

“No other names are being mentioned. Australia is seen as very much out of touch and out of sync with what’s happening globally.”

On Tuesday, the independent Climate Change Authority (CCA) recommended Australia increase its commitment to cut 2000-level emissions by 2020 from 5% to 19% if it wanted to be taken seriously at the Paris climate change talks, a suggestion the environment minister, Greg Hunt, described as “onerous”.

Meanwhile the prime minister, Tony Abbott, has directed \$4m to start a climate consensus centre fronted by political scientist and climate change contrarian Bjørn Lomborg.

Canada has also been criticised for climate change inaction, and for failing to mention climate change in its economic action plan.

But it was clear that many countries, particularly in Asia, where 21 of a forecast 37 megacities are expected to be within 30 years, were “ambitiously and aggressively” taking steps to reduce carbon emissions and reliance on fossil fuels, Doherty said.

Large cities contributed disproportionately to climate change, he said, with roughly 75% of CO2 emissions from burning fossil fuels coming from cities.

It meant designing new buildings to be energy efficient, and focusing on public transport rather than building new roads, would be key measures for major cities in trying to curb global warming, he said, with up to 80% of the population expected to be living in large cities by 2050.

“Too often the focus is on mining and other big polluters, which is important, but so is rapid urbanisation,” Doherty said.

But he said it may be tough to get the Australian government to endorse and adopt the symposium memorandum, which will urge governments to make climate change mitigation in major cities a focus of climate change policy.

“I don’t think we’re going to get far with the present government leadership, but when [communications minister] Malcolm Turnbull was leading the party he was quite willing to sign on to a carbon trading scheme, so there are those people open to the evidence,” Doherty said.

“There’s been a lot of discussion here about how science has to operate more effectively in the political sphere than it’s doing currently, and that’s been a challenge globally.

“It’s cut through in Europe because they’ve had major, catastrophic climate events such as flooding, while in Britain, better relationships have been established between science and government, and I think that’s to do with London being the major political and economic centre, and there being senior scientists within the House of Lords, so all the people who need to be talking to each other are in one place.”

Doherty said he became interested in climate change science because of the direct impact on health, such as increased heat stress from heatwaves, and indirect effects, such as hunger due to unpredictable severe weather patterns, or the spreading of insect-borne diseases such as malaria from the tropics to other regions.

While he believes these were risks the government were failing to address, he did not believe the scientific community, especially in Australia, was deterred by its evidence being rejected.

"They know if they put their head up, they'll be attacked, and they're used to being slammed" he said.

"These are robust, tough people. The difference between people like me and the person running the government is I'm interested in evidence, insights, solutions and solving problems, and he is interested in ideology and looking backwards. But we won't be deterred."

<http://www.theguardian.com/environment/2015/apr/25/australia-public-enemy-number-one-of-un-climate-talks-says-nobel-laureate>

2. Academic likens Lomborg appointment to putting Brian Burke in charge of economy

The Age
April 25, 2015 - 1:03AM
James Massola, Matthew Knott

University of Western Australia academic Ray Wills has compared the appointment of "sceptical environmentalist" Bjorn Lomborg to head up a new development think tank to putting disgraced former premier Brian Burke in charge of economic policy.

And at least one academic has publicly called on university vice-chancellor Paul Johnson to reconsider Dr Lomborg's appointment in a crunch meeting with staff on Friday, according to Academic Staff Association president Raymond da Silva Rosa.

Adjunct Professor Wills, who has been a spokesman for the university on climate change issues for the past seven years, said there was a lot of disquiet among the university ranks about the centre.

"The appointment tarnishes the reputation of the university," he told Fairfax Media.

"It's like appointing Brian Burke to look after your economics.

"The vice-chancellor has actually said it [the centre] will be about economics, not climate change. But the response to climate change we need is about economics, and Lomborg is on record saying we don't need action on climate change."

At Friday's meeting, the 150-seat lecture theatre was full, with some academics sitting in the aisles and others turned away because of health and safety concerns. Staff from various departments were represented, including from business, biology and earth sciences.

According to sources at the meeting, one lecturer said Dr Lomborg's appointment was "a very large mistake and an attack on the integrity of the university".

"Can we get out of this?" the lecturer asked.

Fairfax Media understands that the head of the School of Animal Biology Sarah Dunlop also spoke out against the appointment.

On Thursday, it was revealed Professor Dunlop had sent a letter to David Harrison, UWA's head of corporate and government affairs, stating one international research fellow was already set to transfer their fellowship to another institution in protest at Dr Lomborg's appointment.

On behalf of her school, Professor Dunlop wrote that Dr Lomborg did not have the necessary academic track record to justify his appointment as an adjunct professor.

"Academics spoke about a sense of confusion and shame," a source said of the meeting.

"The room was definitely very opposed to the appointment. No one spoke out in favour of it."

The vice-chancellor was also asked whether the university had considered the potential for reputational damage to the university from the appointment.

Professor Johnson said that Dr Lomborg was not a climate sceptic and is a former member of Greenpeace.

"That went down really well," dead-panned one person at the meeting.

Professor da Silva Rosa, who ran the meeting, said it

had gone well because "people asked the tough questions and the VC answered them", adding that "people who have a sense of disquiet about the appointment were represented".

"People asked him [the vice-chancellor] to reconsider the appointment," he said.

"I didn't get the sense that would happen."

Further meetings will be held between unhappy university staff and the vice-chancellor in the coming weeks, he added.

After the meeting, Professor Johnson said that a contract had been signed between the university and the federal government and the creation of the centre would go ahead.

He welcomed the "passionate" discussion about the appointment and that universities should be a place for those sorts of debates.

Fairfax Media also revealed on Thursday that Prime Minister Tony Abbott's office - not Education Minister Christopher Pyne - drove the push to hand \$4 million in federal funding for the think tank.

Mr Pyne had faced calls to resign over the move.

On Friday, the minister accused sections of the media of hyperventilating over the issue, compared the allocation of \$4 million by Labor to a think tank while in government and said, "it is not a climate think tank, it's an economic think tank".

Dr Lomborg is a controversial figure who argues the risks of climate change have been overstated and it is more important to tackle problems such as malaria, though he accepts the science of human-induced climate change.

He has campaigned against the Kyoto Protocol and downplayed the effectiveness of carbon pricing schemes in tackling climate change, instead favouring investments in research and development.

<http://www.theage.com.au/federal-politics/political-news/academic-likens-lomborg-appointment-to-putting-brian-burke-in-charge-of-economy-20150424-1msjfm.html>

3. Jonathan Holmes: A chilling step closer to Australian secret police

Foreign journalists are falling off their chairs in shock at the brutality of our data retention law, yet we hardly blink an eye.

Sydney Morning Herald
April 22, 2015 - 12:00AM
Jonathan Holmes

For days, we've been scaring ourselves silly, because a few Melbourne teenagers might have planned to attack police officers with knives on Anzac Day. Good on the cops for nabbing them, but hardly an existential threat to our society.

Meanwhile, nine days ago, the Telecommunications (Interception and Access) Amendment (Data Retention) Act 2015 became law, after passing through both houses of Parliament with Labor support.

A record of your electronic communications – who you call, or text, or email, or message, when you do so, and where you are at the time – must now be kept by your service provider for a minimum of two years. And more than 20 law enforcement agencies will have access to those records without the need for a warrant, and without (needless to say) anyone informing you.

Well, Attorney-General George Brandis asks, how worrisome is that? After all, before this law was passed, your metadata was available to 85 agencies.

"The only change that this bill makes to the relationship between the state and the citizen," he told the Senate, "is to introduce safeguards in relation to the access of law enforcement agencies to metadata, which were not there before."

In particular, Senator Brandis addressed the so-called "chilling effect" on investigative journalism that the media feared would result from the authorities' ability to scour reporters' metadata in search of their confidential sources. That's been fixed, he assured us. The new act contains "a large and detailed architecture for the protection of journalists ... which forms no part of the existing law".

So it does. And I've been brooding about that architecture for the past two weeks, as I sat for many hours on aeroplanes, courtesy of the ABC's Foreign Correspondent. I've talked about it to journalists in Paris, Washington and New York, specialists in reporting on terrorism and counter-terrorism. And when I described one particular facet of the act to them – one that has received minimal comment here in Australia – they nearly fell off their chairs.

Division 4C of the amended act lays down that if a law enforcement agency wants to search a professional journalist's metadata in pursuit of his or her source, it first has to get a "journalist information warrant" from an "issuing authority" - usually a judge or magistrate - or in the Australian Security Intelligence Organisation's case, from the Attorney-General.

The authority should only issue the warrant, the act says, if the public interest in doing so outweighs various other public interests, including the source's right to privacy. The authority must also weigh in the balance any arguments made by a public interest advocate.

This curious person – a senior lawyer (of course) with the necessary security clearances – will be appointed by the Prime Minister, no less. And, in the soothing words of the opposition defence spokesman, Labor's Stephen Conroy, "the PIA will be empowered to stand in the shoes of the journalist and argue why it is contrary to the public interest to issue the warrant".

Well fine. Except there's a Kafkaesque catch-22. The public interest advocate will not be able to inform the journalist or news organisation that a warrant has been sought, so the advocate cannot be briefed on any public interest aspect of the story, or any particular reason why the source should remain confidential, that is not already blindingly obvious.

Indeed, this public interest advocacy will not be public. It will be utterly private: one lawyer secretly trying to persuade another lawyer why a spook or a copper should not get access to a reporter's source, while the reporter – and, of course, the source – remain in blissful ignorance.

And here comes the kicker: the clause that had those foreign reporters falling off their chairs, but was barely mentioned by anyone, so far as I can see, in the parliamentary debates about the bill.

Section 182A of the new act says anyone who "discloses or uses" information about a journalist information warrant – about whether one has been applied for, or has been granted, or exists, or even does not exist - can be sent to prison for two years. Think about that.

What possible justification can there be for this extraordinary provision? After all, these warrants need have nothing whatever to do with terrorism or national security. They can be issued to any agency that is investigating pretty much any crime (including, presumably, the crime committed by any Commonwealth public servant who leaks official information to the media – see section 70 of the Crimes Act).

Section 182A is of a piece with the increasingly draconian enforcement of secrecy that Australians have blithely accepted since 9/11.

The 2003 act, for example, authorises ASIO to detain and question people for up to seven days, even if they are not suspected of complicity in a terrorist act, and prevents them from telling anybody that it has happened. The 2014 act says anyone who discloses information about a "special intelligence operation" can be imprisoned for up to 10 years. And there are many more such examples.

In the course of the debate on the new Data Retention Act, Conroy made this extraordinary statement: "Labor is determined to ensure that our national security and law enforcement agencies absolutely have the powers that are necessary to keep Australians safe."

"Absolutely" – what a dangerous word. Absolutism has no place in a democracy, especially not when it is applied to national security agencies. The more power you give any organisation, the more light needs to be shone on how it uses its power. To meet the terrorist "threat", we have been granting our security agencies and police forces more and more power, protected by ever more obsessive secrecy: more power, and more secrecy, than any comparable democracy in the world.

It is no exaggeration to say Australia is on the way to creating a secret police. What a triumph that is for the terrorists.

Jonathan Holmes is a Fairfax columnist and a former presenter of the ABC's Media Watch program.

<http://www.smh.com.au/comment/a-chilling-step-closer-to-australian-secret-police-20150421-1mpgdk.html>

4. 'Accountant of Auschwitz': I am morally complicit in murder of millions of Jews

Oskar Gröning, charged with complicity in the murder of 300,000 Holocaust victims, expresses remorse during trial in Germany

The Guardian
Kate Connolly in Lüneburg
Tuesday 21 April 2015 21.28 AEST

A former SS guard expressed remorse for the role he played in the Holocaust when he went on trial charged with complicity in the murder of 300,000 Jews.

In a lengthy speech, Oskar Gröning, 93, referred to as the “accountant of Auschwitz”, recounted the two years he had spent at the extermination camp after volunteering for the SS, the Nazi party’s protection squadron.

Survivors of the Holocaust, many of whom have travelled from the US, Canada and Hungary in the hope of seeing justice done for their relatives who were murdered after a wait of 70 years, listened intently as Gröning spoke in court in Lüneburg, northern Germany.

“It is without question that I am morally complicit in the murder of millions of Jews through my activities at Auschwitz,” the retired bank clerk said, clutching his notes and looking directly at the bench. “Before the victims, I also admit to this moral guilt here, with regret and humility. To the question as to whether I am criminally culpable, that’s for you to decide.”

His statement came at the end of a detailed 50-minute account of his time at Auschwitz-Birkenau, which included how he was initially sent there and his attempts to get transferred elsewhere because of the atrocities he had seen, including seeing an SS colleague bashing a baby to death against the side of a lorry.

What will be one of the last Nazi trials in Germany is being watched closely by historians, Holocaust experts and human rights lawyers around the world.

Judge Frank Kom Pisch said for everyone present it was “anything but an easy event”. “Without exaggeration ... this trial will attract a lot of attention and cause many emotions to be released, but we must remember that it is a criminal trial, albeit one with its own historical context,” he said.

The trial marks the second attempt to bring Gröning to court. An investigation that began in 1978 collapsed seven years later with prosecutors ruling that unless it could be proven that Gröning was directly responsible for the deaths of prisoners, he could not be put on trial. But since the 2012 conclusion of the trial of John Demjanjuk in Munich, in which judges ruled he was an accessory to mass murder simply by working at the Sobibor extermination camp, a change of practice has taken place, in which an individual’s mere presence at a concentration camp coupled with the knowledge they knew what was happening there, is sufficient to secure a conviction.

Gröning, who entered court pushing a walking frame, appeared calm and to take an active interest in the proceedings. Clutching a black battered briefcase containing his notes and wearing gold-rimmed glasses and a sleeveless pullover, he initially spoke to acknowledge his name, date of birth, that he was widowed, and a pensioner. Asked how old his children were, there was a long pause, before he answered: “Sixty-five and 70”.

He appeared deeply concentrated as Jens Lehmann, the state prosecutor, read from the 85-page indictment, in which he detailed Gröning’s tasks at Auschwitz-Birkenau, including taking the suitcases from prisoners as they arrived at the camp and were selected into groups of those who would work and those who would be sent to their deaths.

He said he had also been responsible for collecting the money in an array of currencies that was found in prisoners’ clothing and luggage, for recording it in a ledger, keeping it in a steel safe, and at various intervals taking the money to the Reich headquarters in Berlin. “Already on his first day the accused was informed by a colleague that those who were not chosen to work would be sent to their deaths,” Lehmann said.

Prosecutors have concentrated the charge on the period between May and July 1944, the time of the mass deportation of Hungary’s Jewish community during which 137 trains brought 425,000 people to Auschwitz, of whom at least 300,000 were killed in the gas chambers.

<http://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/apr/21/accountant-auschwitz-oskar-groning-trial-nazi-germany>

5. Libya migrant boat sinking: Up to 700 feared dead as migrant ship capsizes in waters south of Italy

ABC News Online / AFP

First posted Sun 19 Apr 2015, 4:32pm

Updated Mon 20 Apr 2015, 11:13am

Pope Francis and United Nations chief Ban Ki-moon have united in calls for action after as many as 700 migrants drowned when their boat capsized in the Mediterranean en route to Europe.

The UN refugee agency (UNHCR) and Italy’s coastguard said only 28 people had survived the Sunday sinking, which is being described as the deadliest such disaster to date in the Mediterranean.

Reports suggested there had been about 700 people on board the 20-metre fishing boat, officials said.

“It seems we are looking at the worst massacre ever seen in the Mediterranean,” UNHCR spokeswoman Carlotta Sami said.

Malta's prime minister Joseph Muscat said rescuers were at the scene searching for survivors among corpses floating in the water.

"They are literally trying to find people alive among the dead floating in the water," he said.

"This could possibly be the biggest tragedy to have ever taken place in the Mediterranean.

"Children, men, and women have died."

Pope Francis also urged EU leaders to act to stem the loss of life.

"These are men and women like us, brothers seeking a better life," he said in his weekly address to the Roman Catholic faithful in St Peter's Square, urging leaders to "act decisively and quickly to stop these tragedies from recurring".

UN secretary-general Mr Ban said he was "shocked and deeply saddened" by the reports of the latest boat disaster.

Mr Ban "appeals to the international community for solidarity and burden-sharing in the face of this crisis," said a statement from his spokesman.

He said governments must not only improve rescue at sea but also "ensure the right to asylum of the growing number of people worldwide fleeing war who need refuge and safe haven".

Boat capsized as passengers tried to board rescue vessel

Coastal authorities in Italy and Malta picked up a distress signal from the stricken vessel around midnight (local time) on Saturday, when it was about 126 kilometres off the Libyan coast and 177 kilometres south of the Italian island of Lampedusa.

The Italian coastguard instructed a nearby merchant ship to go to the scene and it was when the Portuguese-registered King Jacob arrived at the scene that the fishing boat capsized, most likely as a result of the terrified passengers stampeding to one side in their desperation to get off, Ms Sami said.

A total of 17 boats scoured the area for survivors on Sunday but only 24 bodies had been recovered so far, the Italian coastguard said.

"Although we are seeing encouraging signs from European politicians, action must be taken," Mr Muscat said.

"A time will come when Europe will be judged harshly for its inaction as it was judged when it had turned a blind eye to genocide."

The EU announced an emergency meeting of foreign and interior ministers to discuss what Amnesty International described as an avoidable "man-made tragedy".

Italian prime minister Matteo Renzi called for an emergency summit of European Union (EU) leaders.

"We are working to ensure this meeting can be held by the end of the week," he said.

"It has to be a priority. We cannot remain insensitive when every day there is a massacre in the Mediterranean," he said.

The president of the European Council said he was planning to hold an emergency summit on illegal immigration in the wake of the tragedy.

Donald Tusk said on Twitter he had spoken to Mr Muscat and would discuss the immigration crisis with other EU leaders.

In indirect criticism of northern EU countries that have so far left rescue operations to southern states such as Italy, EU foreign policy chief Federica Mogherini said: "We need to save human lives all together, as all together we need to protect our borders and to fight the trafficking of human beings."

Amnesty says death toll a shock, not a surprise

Amnesty's John Dalhuisen called Sunday's accident a "man-made tragedy of appalling proportions".

"These latest deaths at sea come as a shock, but not a surprise," he said.

Amnesty is among numerous NGOs calling for the restoration of an Italian navy search-and-rescue operation known as Mare Nostrum which was suspended at the end of last year.

Italy scaled back the mission after failing to persuade its European partners to help meet its operating costs of \$12.5 million per month, amid divisions over whether the mission was unintentionally encouraging migrants to attempt the crossing.

Mare Nostrum has been partially replaced by a much smaller EU-run operation called Triton which has a fraction of the assets and specialist manpower previously deployed by Italy.

The migrants seeking to reach Europe with the help of people smugglers are generally fleeing conflict or persecution in places such as Eritrea, Afghanistan and Syria, or poverty and hunger in sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia.

2015 Mediterranean shipwreck death toll set to pass 1,600

The disaster is the latest in a growing number of mass drownings of migrants attempting to reach Europe on overcrowded, unseaworthy boats run by people smugglers who are able to operate out of Libya with impunity because of the chaos engulfing the north African state.

The most serious incident prior to Sunday occurred off Malta in September 2014.

An estimated 500 migrants drowned in a shipwreck caused by traffickers deliberately ramming the boat in an attempt to force the people on board onto another, smaller vessel.

In October 2013, more than 360 Africans perished when the tiny fishing boat they were crammed onto caught fire within sight of the coast of Lampedusa.

That horrific tragedy was described at the time as a wake-up call to the world but 18 months later there is no sign of a decrease in the numbers of people attempting the perilous crossing in search of a better life in Europe.

The latest disaster came after a week in which two other migrant shipwrecks left an estimated 450 people dead.

If the worst fears of Sunday's tragedy are confirmed, it will take the death toll since the start of 2015 to more than 1,600.

More than 11,000 other would-be immigrants have been rescued since the middle of last week and current trends suggest last year's total of 170,000 migrants landing in Italy is likely to be at least matched in 2015.

<http://www.abc.net.au/news/2015-04-19/up-to-700-feared-dead-after-migrant-boat-sinks-off-libya/6404438>

6. EU leaders discuss possible attacks on people smugglers

Migrant boat disaster: EU leaders discuss possible attacks on people smugglers to stem tide of migrants crossing Mediterranean

ABC News Online
Posted Fri 24 Apr 2015, 5:11am

European Union leaders have met in Brussels for crisis talks on possible military action against human traffickers in Libya, in a desperate bid to halt the wave of migrants trying to reach Europe by sea.

An emergency summit, called after up to 900 people drowned after their boat capsized on Sunday, also agreed to triple the funding for the EU's search and rescue operation in the Mediterranean.

In a step towards possible military action, European Council chief Donald Tusk said leaders had tasked EU foreign policy head Federica Mogherini to "propose action in order to capture and destroy the smugglers' vessels before they can be used."

French president Francois Hollande added separately that his country would seek a UN resolution to destroy migrant traffickers' boats.

But leaders failed to agree on concrete action over the sensitive issue of what to do with migrants once they land on European shores.

"I had hoped we could have been more ambitious but that was not possible," EU Commission chief Jean-Claude Juncker said at a post-summit press briefing.

German chancellor Angela Merkel said on arrival that Europe's values and credibility in the rest of the world were on the line "and so the issue today is of the greatest importance, in terms of saving human lives".

Underlining global attention, the United Nations criticised the European response so far and urged it to do more: "The European Union response needs to go beyond the present minimalist approach... which focuses primarily on stemming the arrival of migrants and refugees on its shores."

British prime minister David Cameron, fighting an election against the anti-immigration populist UKIP, pledged his navy's helicopter-carrying flagship and two other vessels to a search and rescue operation he previously refused to support for fear of tempting more people out to sea.

But he stressed those picked up would not automatically be given refuge in Britain and would mostly be delivered to Italy, whose prime minister, Matteo Renzi, said he was optimistic that his European allies would no longer let Rome struggle alone.

Even as they gathered, the Italian coast guard picked up 84 men, all apparently sub-Saharan Africans, from a sinking rubber boat 60 kilometres off Libya after receiving a distress call.

Full story at <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2015-04-24/eu-leaders-meet-in-brussels-to-pledge-rescue-for-migrants/6417340>

7. 'Tiny hearts': What the UK has been told about Australia's asylum seeker policy

The Age
April 20, 2015 - 10:47AM
Matthew Knott

One of Britain's most controversial commentators has sparked a furore by suggesting Europe follow Australia's approach to asylum seekers by "threatening them with violence until they bugger off".

In an article comparing North African asylum seekers to "cockroaches", The Sun columnist Katie Hopkins praises Australians for being like British people but with "balls of steel, can-do brains, tiny hearts and whacking great gunships".

Hopkins argues that European countries should adopt the Abbott government's turn-back-the-boats policy - an approach she calls an "Aussie version of sharia stoning".

The column - characterised by The Independent as "a piece so hateful that it might give Hitler pause" - was published days before a ship carrying 700 hopeful migrants sank in the Mediterranean.

Immigration has been one of the key issues in the lead up to UK general election in May. The leader of the United Kingdom Independence Party (UKIP), which is expected to lift its vote significantly, has called for Britain to adopt an Australian-style visa system to reduce the number of unskilled workers coming from Europe.

"It's time to get Australian," Hopkins wrote in The Sun, commenting on the surge of boats attempting to reach Europe from North Africa.

"Australians are like British people but with balls of steel, can-do brains, tiny hearts and whacking great gunships.

"Their approach to migrant boats is the sort of approach we need in the Med.

"They threaten them with violence until they bugger off, throwing cans of Castlemaine [XXXX] in an Aussie version of sharia stoning.

"And their approach is working. Migrant boats have halved in number since Prime Minister Tony Abbott got tough."

Hopkins summarises her solution to the increasing number of boats attempting to reach Europe from North Africa as: "Bring on the gunships, force migrants back to their shores and burn the boats."

Tough action is needed because some British towns have become "festering sores, plagued by swarms of migrants and asylum seekers, shelling out benefits like Monopoly money".

"Make no mistake, these migrants are like cockroaches," she writes. "They might look a bit like 'Bob Geldof's Ethiopia circa 1984', but they are built to survive a nuclear bomb."

British comedian Russell Brand tweeted to Hopkins: "[T]o write about immigrants so hatefully you cannot love yourself. Come back to humanity, you must be shattered."

Hopkins has previously stoked controversy by calling dementia patients "bed blockers" who take up scarce hospital beds and saying that she would not let her children play with classmates with names such as Tyler and Chardonnay.

Last month UKIP leader Nigel Farage said: "What we want to do is change our relationship with the European Union, take back control of our borders and put in place a positive immigration policy.

"By that I mean we want an Australian-style points system to decide who comes to live, work and settle in this country."

<http://www.theage.com.au/federal-politics/political-news/tiny-hearts-what-the-uk-has-been-told-about-australias-asylum-seeker-policy-20150420-1momxh.html>

8. Julian Burnside: 'Tiny hearts' and 'balls of steel'. This is what the world thinks of Australia

Katie Hopkins has held Australia up to the world as some kind of racist role model for our violent treatment of asylum seekers. And why wouldn't she?

The Guardian
Julian Burnside
Monday 20 April 2015 15.51 AEST

Australians have "tiny hearts and whacking great gunships". We "threaten [migrant boats] with violence until they bugger off". And British people should be more like us.

That's Katie Hopkins' view, at least. Her column for the Sun on Saturday about asylum seekers leaving North Africa, crossing the Mediterranean by boat and arriving in the EU was full of this candid language, the sort of thing you might expect to hear outside a pub just after closing time.

Hopkins, who first came to public attention on the reality TV show *The Apprentice*, calls asylum seekers "vermin" and "a virus". In her view, "These migrants are like cockroaches". Some of them eventually get to Britain – a place Hopkins wishes to keep free of boat arrivals – which should prompt the UK to "get Australian".

Perhaps there are a few people in Australia who would share this opinion, and would rather see people die than reach our shores. As an Australian, I prefer to think that people who genuinely share Hopkins' view of things are a tiny minority.

That's because I believe most Australians are decent people who genuinely believe in a fair go for everyone. So it comes as a shock to see Hopkins invoking Australia's approach to asylum seekers as an example of best practice.

While her view of Australians is deeply offensive, it has to be said that it is a view increasingly held of us by others. Overseas, we are seen as cruel and selfish, which in Hopkins' view corresponds to "balls of steel [and] can-do brains".

She goes on to say, "Migrant boats have halved in number since Australian Prime Minister Tony Abbott got tough." The Australian government, for its part, insists that boat arrivals on our northern border have, effectively, stopped.

Let's assume that is true. Two questions remain: what is the value of stopping boat arrivals? And what is the cost?

Initially, the Abbott government's justification for its hardline policy on asylum seekers arriving by boat, dubbed Operation Sovereign Borders, was that it would save lives. There is no evidence to support that idea. Of course, it is tragic when asylum seekers die in a desperate attempt to reach protection. It is also tragic when they stay behind and are slaughtered.

The key difference is that when they stay behind and become another statistic in the grim arithmetic of ethnic cleansing, we do not empathise with them; our conscience remains untouched. When we learn that they have perished in an attempt to seek safety in our country, it seems different.

Nor have the boats stopped setting out. They have just been turned back by the Australian Navy, which has even breached Indonesian territorial waters in the enterprise.

And the public is not allowed to know how many people have perished in their thwarted attempt to get here, because that is an "operational matter" that has become a state secret.

So, Australia cannot sensibly claim to have saved any lives, although it may have saved its citizens the burden of compassion. The only benefit we can point to is that we are not encumbered with refugees who come by boat, although we are untroubled by refugees who come by plane.

Second question: is it a benefit to reduce the number of asylum seekers who get to Australia?

It is worth knowing that the average number of asylum seekers who have arrived here by boat in the past was about 2,000 per year. The highest number over the past few decades is 25,000 in one year. Not a big number in such a big country.

Not a big number when you consider that, at any given time, there are about 50,000 people in the community who overstay their tourist visas, mostly backpackers from Europe and the US. Not a big number when you consider that we receive about 200,000 new permanent immigrants each year.

So, stopping the refugee boats is a trivial demographic benefit. It does, however, provide a great political benefit to the government, because they have created the entirely false idea that refugees are criminals and that ordinary Australians need to be protected from them.

By calling boat people “illegals” the Abbott government has deceived the public and has induced them to tolerate the calculated mistreatment of people who are desperate enough to risk their lives to escape persecution. The Labor opposition has not dared step forward to tell the truth about it.

Even if we are so in love with politicians that we get pleasure from giving them a political advantage (even a dishonest one), we need to look at what it costs us.

Australia spends about \$5bn a year mistreating asylum seekers. But that is just the financial cost. As Hopkins' column shows, it has plainly cost us our national reputation.

Refugees have traditionally made a major contribution to the Australian economy. Many major studies show that the initial costs associated with new arrivals are more than compensated for once immigrants have been in Australia more than 10 years.

“Boat people” are a special group of immigrants. They do not come as a free choice: they come to escape persecution in their own country. They come from a different culture, with a different language; they risk their lives to get here and they take on the burden of starting again.

What's not to like about them? They are people with initiative and courage, not, as Hopkins says, a “plague of feral humans”.

It would be a fine thing if we could show Katie Hopkins she is wrong about Australians. But that won't happen until our politicians start telling the truth: we are brutalising innocent people, and it's simply un-Australian.

<http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2015/apr/20/tiny-hearts-and-balls-of-steel-this-is-what-the-world-thinks-of-australia>

9. Conservative columnist Katie Hopkins reported to police over asylum seeker views

The Age
April 21, 2015 - 10:43AM
Matthew Knott

Controversial British columnist Katie Hopkins has been reported to police for allegedly inciting racial hatred in an article applauding Australia for threatening asylum seekers "with violence until they bugger off".

In an article for The Sun comparing North African migrants to "cockroaches", Katie Hopkins praises Australians for being like British people but with "balls of steel, can-do brains, tiny hearts and whacking great gunships". Europe should adopt Australia's turn-back-the-boats policy for migrants attempting to arrive from North Africa, she wrote.

On Monday, Hopkins and The Sun editor David Dinsmore were reported to the Metropolitan Police Commissioner's Office over the article by the Society of Black Lawyers.

In the complaint, published by The Independent, Society of Black Lawyers chairman Peter Herbert described Hopkins' comments as "some of the most offensive, xenophobic and racist comments I have read in a British newspaper for some years".

Herbert said that Hopkins' use of the term "cockroaches" echoed the use of the word to describe the Tutsi minority and Hutu moderates during the 1994 Rwanda genocide.

The Sun columnist Katie Hopkins. Photo: Getty Images

He wrote: "The Society of Black Lawyers (SBL) therefore requests that this matter is investigated as a matter of urgency under the Public Order Act 1986. I am aware that this section requires some intention but given the scale of the tragedy currently unfolding, the likelihood some of these migrants may already be in the UK having fled during previous months or likely to land here in due course these comments can amount to incitement to racial hatred.

"We are in the process of writing formally to the International Criminal Court to petition for an investigation into these comments under the provisions of incitement to commit crimes against humanity.

"Given the huge circulation of these comments in The Sun and in the media generally, the propensity for racial violence against people of African descent in the UK is obvious. We request that these matters be investigated as a matter of urgency and the case file be passed to the [Crown Prosecution Service] for a decision to be made as to the merits of a prosecution."

A petition calling for The Sun to sack Hopkins over the article has attracted over 200,000 signatures.

Around 1300 migrants are estimated to have died in less than a fortnight in the waters south of Sicily. On Monday European Union leaders announced that they would launch new military operations against people smuggling networks in Libya, including destroying ships, as well as expanding search-and-rescue patrols.

<http://www.theage.com.au/federal-politics/political-news/conservative-columnist-katie-hopkins-reported-to-police-over-asylum-seeker-views-20150421-1mpjr7.html>

10. Follow Australia and ignore 'Mrs Lovejoys' on asylum seeker boats: Daniel Hannan

The Age
April 23, 2015 - 8:30AM
Matthew Knott

A prominent British politician has urged European leaders to ignore the self-righteous "Mrs Lovejoys" who decry tough border protection policies and instead adopt Australia's turn-back-the-boats policy.

The Simpsons character Helen Lovejoy, the wife of a reverend, is famous for her catchphrase: "Won't somebody please think of the children?"

Rather than writing social media posts expressing compassion for migrants attempting to reach Europe by boat, Conservative politician Daniel Hannan says Europeans should learn from countries like Australia.

The comments came as Foreign Minister Julie Bishop appeared to distance herself from Prime Minister Tony Abbott's calls for Europe to adopt Australia-style policies to stop the boats.

Australia's asylum seeker policies are attracting increasing attention in Europe, where leaders are searching for solutions to the Mediterranean migrant crisis. Up to 1300 migrants drowned over the past week en route from northern Africa.

The Sun columnist Kate Hopkins provoked outrage in Britain this week by calling North African migrants "cockroaches" in an article arguing Europe should adopt the Abbott government's turn-back-the-boats policy - an approach she called an "Aussie version of sharia stoning".

"It's often sensible, in these situations, to learn from others' experience," Mr Hannan, a member of the European Parliament since 1999, wrote in a piece for the CapX website.

"Australia recently faced similar problems: creaking boats attempting to reach its shores any means, sometimes with tragic consequences.

"The Prime Minister, Tony Abbott, took the view that, if would-be migrants knew that they would not be able to land in Australia, the numbers attempting the crossing would fall, and the tragedies would become less frequent.

"And you know what? He was right.

"Some Australian Mrs Lovejoys shrieked in protest, and some are still shrieking, but there is general support for what Mr Abbott calls "the most decent, most compassionate" solution – one that rewards law-abiding immigrants rather than allowing the people traffickers to determine who enters Australia."

It is hard to argue with Mr Abbott's comments that "the only way to stop the deaths is to stop the boats", Mr Hannan wrote.

"My advice, for what it's worth, is to change the rules so that it's possible to return boats safely to their point of departure," he wrote. "Only then will people stop attempting these dreadful crossings."

The "Mrs Lovejoys" on social media are more concerned about showing how caring they are than finding solutions to drownings at sea, according to Mr Hannan.

"The writer James Bartholomew has recently come up with an apt label for the phenomenon: 'virtue signalling'," Mr Hannan wrote. "That phrase neatly encapsulates our generation's elevation of the moralistic (holding the correct opinions) over the moral (doing the right thing). I hope it becomes a Twitter staple, a standard riposte to those who think they prove their compassion by hating the right people.

"For the permanently angry Tweepers, this isn't about the welfare of the refugees. It's all about them. It always is."

Speaking to reporters in Berlin on Wednesday, Ms Bishop said: "I'm very conscious of the fact that the geographic circumstances are very different between Europe and Australia and I'm very conscious of the fact that what works in one circumstance may or may not work in another.

"Our PM has offered up the experience of Australia for others to consider, but it is for the governments and regions to make their own decisions as to what they believe will work to resolve these issues."

<http://www.theage.com.au/federal-politics/political-news/follow-australia-and-ignore-mrs-lovejoys-on-asylum-seeker-boats-daniel-hannan-20150422-1mr8j1.html>

11. Tony Abbott urges Europe to adopt stronger border protection policies following migrant boat sinkings

ABC News Online

By political reporter Jane Norman

Posted Tue 21 Apr 2015, 8:57am

Prime Minister Tony Abbott is urging Europe to "urgently" adopt stronger border protection policies following the latest asylum seeker boat disaster in the Mediterranean.

The European Union held an emergency meeting overnight as the first bodies were brought ashore of up to 900 people feared killed in a shipwreck while trying to reach Europe.

"Plainly there is a terrible, terrible tragedy unfolding in the Mediterranean right now," Mr Abbott said.

"We have got hundreds, maybe thousands of people drowning in the attempts to get from Africa to Europe."

The Prime Minister said while Australians would grieve the loss, European leaders must resolve to stop the "terrible problem".

"The only way you can stop the deaths is to stop the people smuggling trade. The only way you can stop the deaths is in fact to stop the boats," he said.

"That's why it is so urgent that the countries of Europe adopt very strong policies that will end the people smuggling trade across the Mediterranean."

Retired Major General Jim Molan, who helped develop the Coalition's Operation Sovereign Borders, said the tragedy highlighted Europe's policy incompetence and said countries had a moral obligation to control their borders.

Foreign Minister Julie Bishop described the Mediterranean shipwreck as a horrible tragedy of horrendous proportions and said Australia would be happy to discuss its border protection policies with European countries struggling with an influx of asylum seekers.

"We know that about 1,200 people died trying to get to Australia via the people smuggling trade and we were determined to put an end to that, and we have done so," she said.

"We have managed to stop the flow of people via the people smuggling trade but we have to be ever vigilant. So we are happy to share our experiences.

"We're concerned to share the details of the legislation that we put in place, the actions that we've taken, the policies that we have, but each country will obviously have to deal with this on a national basis and often on a regional basis."

<http://www.abc.net.au/news/2015-04-21/asylum-seekers-abbott-urges-europe-stronger-border-policies/6408552>

12. Refugee crisis: Europe looks to Australia for answers

The Age

April 24, 2015 - 11:45PM

David Wroe

Across Europe, and particularly in Germany, newspapers this week carried stories that asked: Could Australia's tough border protection regime serve as a model for Europe?

"Australia's prime minister tells Europe: Stop the boats!" cried a headline in the Austrian tabloid Kronen.

The centrist Berlin broadsheet Tagesspiegel wrote of "How Australia stopped the flow of refugees."

The debate was fuelled by Tony Abbott's blunt call for Europe to adopt "very strong policies" in the wake of the drowning of an estimated 800 asylum seekers last weekend and Julie Bishop's tour of the continent in which she was repeatedly asked about Australia's regime.

Bishop told Fairfax Media she received "considerable interest" from journalists and senior officials during her travels. The German Interior Ministry's top bureaucrat, Dr Emily Haber, probed deeply into the issue and took copious notes.

"It's fair to say she was interested in Australia's experience and wanted to hear more. She asked for significant detail," Bishop told Fairfax Media. "I've said we are happy to share experiences and information."

Bishop, however, made the point that Europe was different from Australia and therefore transposing Operation Sovereign Borders to the Mediterranean might not be effective.

So could it work? And would Europe even be interested in going down such a hardline path?

Retired army General Jim Molan, the co-architect of the government's tough border protection regime who kick-started the debate this week with a fierce commentary in *The Australian*, insists it can work.

The European situation is "not markedly different" from Australia's, he said. "Every single one" of the pillars of Australia's approach – boat turn-backs, offshore processing and regional resettlement, removing incentives such as family reunions and showing staunch "resolve" – could be adopted by Europe.

Molan won't go into detail on how precisely it would work, saying operational security is important and it would be up to the Europeans to release information if they wanted to. But he says European nations have large and modern navies, and "for offshore processing, there are any number of options that Europe could use".

"There are places you could do it tomorrow and in many ways it would be easier than Australia's experience."

He refuses to say where, but doesn't deny that North Africa is the logical choice.

Likewise for resettlement. While Libya would seem to be out of the question – after all, people are fleeing Libya itself – "there are other ways to handle that", he said.

If Europe wants to hear about how, they need only ask, he says. "What I'm saying is that when you're ready to control your borders, come and talk to the Australian government because we have all the experience and we know it can be done."

That's the operational perspective. Legally, things are considerably more complex. Jane McAdam, a professor of international refugee law at the University of NSW, pointed out that the European Court of Human Rights had already ruled that boat turn-backs were illegal.

In a landmark case in early 2012, the court found in favour of 24 Somalian and Eritrean asylum seekers who were pushed back to Libya by Italian authorities, concluding that Italy couldn't send them back to where they might suffer human rights abuses.

Elizabeth Collett, director of the Migration Policy Institute Europe, agrees that on boat interceptions there is "enormous jurisprudence and legal basis within the EU which would preclude that". Collett says there has been increased discussion about offshore processing, however, with Germany suggesting Egypt and Italy suggesting Tunisia as possibilities. "It has always been deeply controversial, but there has been renewed interest in discussing that, and you will see more of it in the next month."

It's been controversial because of concerns about whether proper processes can be guaranteed in third countries. Collett says it would be "somewhat extraordinary" for Egypt to be given the task, given its human rights concerns.

McAdam says that a push by Britain in 2003 for Europe to adopt offshore processing had been "shot down in flames by the rest of the EU". Other countries were worried that offshore processing would breach Europe's obligations to give asylum seekers a fair hearing, including access to legal representation and the ability to appeal decisions.

"The consistent view was, how can we do this and still abide by our legal obligations?" McAdam said. Unlike Australia, she points out, the EU incorporates international law into its domestic law.

Collett says the "mood of crisis" following the deaths at sea have prompted a willingness to look hard at new solutions. "Australia's approach has been seen as an extremely tough approach but in a context where politicians just want the boats to stop coming, they also see Australia as having been successful. They want to look at that more."

But it is more of a political discussion for leaders looking for a "quick solution" than a serious and long-term answer, she adds. In the end, Europe is different to Australia, with long and porous land borders, complex sea boundaries and closer proximity to the regions from which people are fleeing.

"I don't think it's the same kind of debate in Europe as happened in Australia," Collett said, "partly because of the geography and because the conflicts in the neighbourhood of Europe are much more immediate."

<http://www.theage.com.au/national/refugee-crisis-europe-looks-to-australia-for-answers-20150424-1ms804.html>

13. David Marr: Tony Abbott? He's too tough on immigration for me, says Nigel Farage

The leader of Britain's rightwing Ukip party praises Australian policy but admits some of the methods used to deter migrants are hard to stomach

The Guardian

David Marr, Ramsgate, Kent

Friday 24 April 2015 11.16 AEST

Nigel Farage is not going all the way with Tony Abbott. At a celebration of St George's Day held in a pub in Kent, the leader of the UK Independence party (Ukip) praised Abbott for showing Europe's leaders how to deal with the boats from Africa.

"I suspect that the Australian premier Tony Abbott actually has got this right," said the leader of Britain's anti-immigration party. "Unless we send the message that however difficult your plight we cannot accept you in unlimited numbers, unless that message gets sent, we may well be facing migration from north Africa over the next couple of years of millions of people."

Farage had arrived for this little rally all smiles. "Right. OK. Very, very good. Right. OK? Ah, there we are. Brilliant," he said as he went down the line of five military veterans gathered for the occasion. They had hoped for more. But one was a colonel. The room was hung with red and white flags of St George. Out of sight was a pile of St George hard hats.

"Why should the English get such a rotten deal?" Farage asked the cameras. "Englishness is something our political class looks down on – no, sneers about."

He wants St George's Day to be declared a national holiday. To celebrate what? "Balance, fairness, fish and chips, roast beef".

Farage is of middle height, wears a suit well and speaks with a soft burr. He clowns but is no fool. He has brought the press to Kent to help in the perhaps impossible task of winning a seat in the House of Commons. Farage has failed in the attempt six times already. One more flop and he and his party are probably finished.

Six months ago, with the backing of 19% of the electorate, Ukip was a dangerous presence in British politics. Neither the Conservatives nor Labour would directly attack the party. Farage's people were to be wooed and flattered. The Conservatives had already offered a simple in/out referendum on Europe to be put in 2017 if David Cameron is returned as prime minister. It's a time bomb under Britain.

But lately support for Ukip has been slipping. The party still has the capacity to do great harm – particularly to the Conservatives – but has the prospect of winning as few as three seats in its own right. One of those seats is this stretch of Kent that Farage hopes will send him to Westminster.

Though there is oddly little sign in most of the country that the UK faces a general election in a fortnight, along the roads in the seat Farage must win are placards, banners, bunting and the occasional parked truck with huge photographs of the leader and the slogan: "Can you trust him to control our borders?"

Farage was all over the mass drownings in the Mediterranean this week. He has been praising Australia for some time for its control of immigration – he loves the points system – and after the terrible news broke of hundreds of deaths at sea, Farage began to sing Abbott's praise for showing how to stop Africans crossing to Europe by sending out a message.

"If the message [is] that Italy and Greece particularly will accept anyone who comes and gives them passports that say European Union, they will all be able to come to this country," he warned. "If Mr Cameron signs up to this idea of burden sharing what we will see is the beginning of a common EU immigration and asylum policy and we want no part of that."

But when asked by Guardian Australia if he supported Abbott's actual strategy for stopping the boats, the Ukip leader sidestepped smartly. "No. No. Mr Abbott was making a general point that if you say everyone is welcome then a lot more people will come. It's a very interesting injection into the debate in Britain and Europe."

What about the machinery? Is he endorsing immigration detention, detention of children, forced pushbacks? Farage made it clear he was not. "Some of the ways that Australia acts on these things," he said, "are tougher than we in Britain can perhaps stomach."

All Farage could suggest the UK might do to deal with the catastrophe on the Mediterranean was to deploy "what we have left of the Royal Navy" to prevent people drowning.

The cameras were hungry for more. Farage climbed behind the bar, put on a party apron in the colours of St George, pulled a beer and proposed a toast: "Hurrah for England."

<http://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2015/apr/24/tony-abbott-hes-too-tough-on-immigration-for-me-says-nigel-farage>

14. If Europe listens to Tony Abbott, the future for refugees will be cruel

Australia's brutal 'solution' to refugees coming by boat is justified in the name of preventing drownings at sea. Europe should not follow us down that path

The Guardian
Richard Ackland
Tuesday 21 April 2015 15.50 AEST

Katie Hopkins' call for gunships to send refugee "cockroaches" back to their own country, and Ukip's ploughing of the anti-immigration furrow are entirely predictable appeals to the chip-butty and pint version of Little England.

What is most cringeworthy is that the Australian "solution" to boat arrivals is now regarded as best practice for the export market.

Australians are repeatedly reminded, by both sides of politics, that a mixture of boat tow-backs and harsh detention centres on remote islands is the best-worst solution to destroy the business model of "evil" people smugglers and prevent deaths at sea.

Tony Abbott, the Australian prime minister, has been quick to recommend his approach to Europe after hundreds of migrants drowned in the Mediterranean.

"The only way you can stop the deaths is to stop the people smuggling trade. The only way you can stop the deaths is in fact to stop the boats," he said.

"That's why it is so urgent that the countries of Europe adopt very strong policies that will end the people smuggling trade across the Mediterranean."

While Hopkins was more concerned to appeal to the readership of "brilliant British truckers" who get fined if they're caught with "feral humans" clinging to the chassis all the way from Calais, it's only a matter of time before Abbott's advice is taken up, and cruelty is presented as the only way to prevent further loss of life in the Med.

Since the election of the Abbott government, those people whose boats are not towed back to Indonesia are being held in detention camps, funded and managed by Australia, on tiny Pacific islands – the Republic of Nauru (formerly known more happily as Pleasant Island) and Manus Island in Papua New Guinea. Some are also on the remote Australian territory of Christmas Island.

They have been advised that they will never be settled in Australia, even if they have refugee status. Instead, the government is seeking to resettle them in Cambodia, which has enough problems of its own, or in PNG. Others are being refouled back to Sri Lanka, Iran and even Vietnam.

The public disquiet is intensified by the repeated and inaccurate description of people seeking the protection of Australia under international law, as "illegals".

Much of this policy was set in place under the previous Labor government, which at one point sought to transfer the problem to Malaysia. The current government has taken it to an entirely new level of wretchedness in its determination to "stop the boats".

Speaking in Queensland earlier this month, Abbott boasted that "any other government, I suspect, would quickly succumb to the cries of the human rights lawyers".

"Our determination to save lives at sea is greater than [people smugglers'] determination to profit from putting people's lives at risk."

It's a distressingly hollow posture when saving lives at sea comes at the price of destroying them emotionally and physically on land. By now, you'd think history would have taught us to see through such spurious moral justifications.

Information to hand from the Australian Human Rights Commission and the Moss report, which examined allegations of physical and sexual abuse on Nauru and the failure of the authorities to exercise a duty of care, leave little doubt that human destruction is in full swing in the camps.

It cannot be hidden by the pea and thimble game played by the Australian government, which claims the offshore detention camps are out of our jurisdiction and in the control of the Papua New Guinean and Nauruan governments.

The camps are entirely creatures of Australia, funded and managed under policies ordained by the Department of Immigration and Border Protection. The fate of asylum seekers returned to countries they fled does not seem to figure in Australia's moral justification.

Calls for a Royal Commission into immigration detention are growing louder, but are likely to fall on deaf government ears.

Guardian Australia has reported the cases of asylum seekers who were tortured after being refouled, the prohibition of which under international law is steadfastly ignored by Australia.

And for that matter we don't know with any accuracy the numbers of people drowned at sea under the current policies, because they are "on water" operational matters subject to Kremlinesque secrecy.

Nor is there an adequate reckoning of lives lost in places of persecution because we have slammed shut the door on the escape route.

The odd thing is that asylum seekers who can land at airports with papers intact are in an advantaged position. They are acceptable, because maybe there is some curious logic at play that they have not endangered themselves at sea.

European and British authorities can learn a lot about how not to handle the problem if they study the Australian "solution". The only reason people get onto boats, with the high risk of drowning, is they have no hope.

Human displacement is now such a massive problem that the boats will never really stop, no matter how hard we pretend to the contrary. The Australian government policy is only tenuously glued together as long as Indonesia accepts tow-backs and as long as Nauru and PNG are bribed with enough money to roll over and handle Australia's problem.

If any of those ingredients collapse, then a more creative policy that gives people hope by a globally recognised resettlement response might have a chance.

Abbott's smug satisfaction with his policy would also come to a shuddering halt should the Indonesian authorities decide they've had enough and provide sufficient boats for about 20,000 or so asylum seekers, refugees and others of concern, mainly on Java, and say to them, "jump in and sail south".

Australia's current policy has been forged by a succession of drownings off the coast of Christmas Island, hand wringing by the major political parties, an expert panel headed by the former defence chief Angus Houston which, in 2012, recommended offshore processing in PNG and Nauru, cooperation with Malaysia and Indonesia and an increase in the humanitarian intake.

The end game was a policy of "no advantage" - if you arrive by boat you should not be advantaged over people seeking resettlement by other means.

Lives may well have been saved at sea, but at what cost if the cornerstone of the deterrent is based on transferring the human destruction from the sea to terra firma?

The latest figures from the immigration department show that we are not really pulling our weight.

In 2012-13, the Australian humanitarian programme was increased to 20,000 places from 13,750 places in 2011-12. A total of 20,019 visas were granted under the humanitarian programme, of which 12,515 were granted under the offshore component and 7,504 under the onshore component.

It's a mere drop. We could comfortably treble that annual intake, with great advantages to the economy and our nation building - quite apart from the need to do something about restoring our humanity.

It's not as though the government in Australia is without policy options. We could easily transfer our humanitarian intakes entirely to the near region, have agencies such as the UNHCR process the applications in camps in Indonesia and Malaysia paid for by the Australian government and shoulder a larger burden of the international crisis in human displacement.

If refugees are given the hope of orderly resettlement, then there is no need for them to risk their lives on boats. Consequently, there is no need for policies that inflict another form of death by a thousand cruelties.

<http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2015/apr/21/if-europe-listens-to-tony-abbott-the-future-for-refugees-will-be-cruel>

15. 'Migrants are like cockroaches': Petition calls for The Sun columnist Katie Hopkins to be sacked

An online petition calling for The Sun's Katie Hopkins to be fired for her 'migrants are cockroaches' column has garnered more than 220,000 signatures.

SBS News
21 Apr 2015 - 12:07pm

An online petition calling for The Sun's Katie Hopkins to be fired for her anti-migrant column has garnered more than 220,000 signatures.

In her latest column, titled "Rescue boats? I'd use gunships to stop migrants", Ms Hopkins likened migrants fleeing from Northern Africa to Italy to "cockroaches". The column was published shortly before hundreds capsized off the coast of Italy over the weekend.

"No, I don't care. Show me pictures of coffins, show me bodies floating in water, play violins and show me skinny people looking sad. I still don't care," she wrote. "Because in the next minute you'll show me pictures of aggressive young men at Calais, spreading like norovirus on a cruise ship.

She added: "Make no mistake, these migrants are like cockroaches. They might look a bit 'Bob Geldof's Ethiopia circa 1984', but they are built to survive a nuclear bomb. They are survivors.

"What we need are gunships sending these boats back to their own country. You want to make a better life for yourself? Then you had better get creative in Northern Africa."

The Change.org petition was started in the UK by British woman Izzy Saunders and has attracted nearly 230,000 supporters, as of Tuesday morning.

"I ask The Sun newspaper and editor David Dinsmore to remove Katie Hopkins as a columnist, at the very least to redeem yourselves from publishing this prejudiced article in the first place," Ms Saunders wrote.

SEE <https://www.change.org/p/the-sun-newspaper-remove-katie-hopkins-as-a-columnist>

Ms Hopkins' comments have attracted widespread criticism, with TV personalities like Russell Brand and Piers Morgan slamming her views.

<http://www.sbs.com.au/news/article/2015/04/21/migrants-are-cockroaches-petition-calls-sun-columnist-katie-hopkins-be-sacked>

16. MEDIA RELEASE: Australia's turn-back policy adds to drowning risks in Europe

Tuesday April 2, 2015
Refugee Action Coalition
Ian Rintoul
mobile 0417 275 713

"Australia's turn back policy may be directly contributing to deaths at sea in Europe," said Ian Rintoul, spokesperson for the Refugee Action Coalition.

"The Coalition's 'stop the boats' slogan was just an ultimatum to asylum seekers to 'die somewhere else' backed up by the military -- and 'dying somewhere else' may be exactly what's happening.

"There are many asylum seekers from the Middle East and Africa languishing in Australian detention centres and on Nauru and Manus Island.

"The Coalition has not stopped the boats; the boats have only been intercepted or displaced. At least 17 boats have attempted to get to Australia since Operation Sovereign Borders began. The navy ship that is returning Vietnamese asylum seekers could just as easily have brought them safely to Australia.

"By denying safe passage for people to come to Indonesia and then to Australia, African and Middle Eastern asylum seekers may have no alternative but to try to get to Europe to find safety.

"Abbott thinks he can grandstand and lecture Europe about 'stopping the boats'. But, the Australian government's policy is part of the problem, not part of the solution. Talk of implementing an Australian turn back policy in Europe is folly and would only increase the dangers for asylum seekers.

"Nor is retired Major-General Molan in any position to be lecturing European leaders about saving lives. The tragedy in the Mediterranean is not a people-smuggling disaster; it is a humanitarian disaster.

"The increase in deaths at sea in the Mediterranean is directly attributable to European governments ending the funding for Italy's 'Mare Nostrum' rescue operation last year. Until it was wound back, 'Mare Nostrum' had rescued around 130,000 people in 2014 alone.

"Europe needs to urgently re-instate funding for rescue operations in the Mediterranean, and allow safe passage for asylum seekers. If the Australian government was seriously interested in saving lives, it would end Operation Sovereign Borders,

fund an effective search and rescue program, and guarantee that refugees in Indonesia would be quickly resettled in Australia."

For more information contact Ian Rintoul 0417 275 713

17. Stop the boats: Three words that shame the country, says ACTU boss Ged Kearney

Sydney Morning Herald
April 19, 2015 - 6:12PM
Jacob Saulwick

Australia's refugee policy is a national shame, the country's top union official has told a rally in Sydney.

About 2000 people attended the "welcome refugees" rally in inner Sydney on Sunday, demanding the closure of offshore detention centres on Manus Island and Nauru.

"Just think about those three small words – stop the boats – never before can I think of three small words that have left such a permanent and dreadful scar on our national psyche," Australian Council of Trade Unions president Ged Kearney said.

"They've caused so much pain, so much misery, so much indignity, so much injustice," Ms Kearney said.

"They have filled . . . this country with lies, with misinformation, and, I'm sad to say, with shame. Absolute shame."

Asylum seeker advocates also used the rally to draw attention to the fate of more than 20 people, including three newborns, who they said were forcibly taken from Darwin to a detention centre on Nauru on Saturday morning.

However, the government disputes this claim.

A Department of Immigration and Border Protection spokesman said there had been "no transfers to Nauru from the Wickham Point [Darwin] immigration detention facility recently".

In her address to the rally, Ms Kearney, who in 2013 criticised the then Labor government's decision to process asylum seekers on Nauru and in Papua New Guinea, lamented the trend of refugee policy since the arrival of the cargo ship Tampa in 2001.

"Imagine if we could wind back time to the Tampa," she said.

"Imagine if one of our political leaders had decided to just, on their own, choose three different words. Imagine if they had said 'we can help'; imagine if they'd said 'come be safe'; imagine if they'd said 'welcome to Australia' how different this would be."

The rally also heard from Graeme McGregor, the refugee campaign co-ordinator at Amnesty International Australia, who said 989 men were detained on Manus Island, and 718 people on Nauru, including 103 children.

"When we turn back boats or deter people using detention centres that violate the convention against torture, those people don't disappear," Mr McGregor said.

"They languish in abusive conditions in the Asia-Pacific [region]; they risk their lives and die trying to reach safety elsewhere," he said. "These policies don't save anyone."

About 15 anti-Islamic protesters took part in a rival action on the other side of Belmore Park, near Central Station.

They sang the national anthem and chanted "if you don't love Australia, pack your bags and leave".

<http://www.smh.com.au/national/stop-the-boats-three-words-that-shame-the-country-says-actu-boss-ged-kearney-20150419-1mobjd.html>

18. VIDEO (Facebook): STOP THE BOATS

As detention centre counsellor and refugee advocate Anne Hilton sets off on a 300km silent walk with a small group of strangers from the Villawood Asylum Seeker Detention Centre in Sydney to Parliament House in Canberra, Stop the Boats is a feature documentary that looks at the plight of asylum seekers who arrive by boat on Australian shores.

See <https://www.facebook.com/stoptheboatsmovie/videos/1392368014415516/>

19. Bruce Haigh: If we were ever the lucky country, we aren't now

We have become a nation of individuals with a sense of entitlement, and are prone to narcissism, jingoism and chauvinism. What's more, there's no political leadership of any colour to turn this around, writes Bruce Haigh.

ABC The Drum
By Bruce Haigh
Posted Fri 24 Apr 2015, 8:11am

Brace yourselves: things are not going to get better in Australia, at least not for some time.

It is to do with our collective moral fibre - or lack of it - as exhibited by our politicians, public servants, captains of business and industry, senior military officers and the media. And the reason is selfishness, greed and immaturity.

The last budget, roundly condemned and rejected by all but the top end of town, was a poorly disguised attack on low-income Australians and those on welfare. Talk of Joe Hockey introducing a "moderate" budget is an admission that Tony Abbott's scorched earth policy has failed. To compound matters, no real alternative vision has been offered to voters, either by the Coalition or Labor.

The collapse of Australia's mining exports will see the economy decline in the absence of other revenue streams developing to overcome the shortfall. Australia is moving into recession and there is nothing the Reserve Bank can do about it, armed with only the crude instrument of adjustments to the interest rate. Insufficient provision was made for the future by the populist Howard government.

The same lack of forethought and planning has given rise to the current crisis in health care and education. Enter any Medicare office in a major centre and witness the confusion and anger. Talk to the staff to see how services and payments are being reduced. It is nonsense to argue a case that costs are spiralling out of control compared to 10 years ago. Together the costs have risen along with the population and proportion of aged people needing care.

The problem lies with a revenue base that is not keeping pace with the needs of the community. Cutting spending on health, education and research will not solve budgetary problems; it will only create further difficulties. Paranoid politicians and public servants should/must consider cutting defence funding, ideologically driven and exorbitant expenditure of keeping Australia free of the contagion of refugees arriving by boat, and the continued subsidy of wealthy elitist private schools.

The national debate about the use and conservation of water and best use of productive land is absent. The National Party should be leading this debate but it is devoid and bereft of ideas and policies to the point that it has seemingly welcomed coal seam gas mining. Its interest has focused on the chauvinistic concern of seeking a register of foreign ownership, which is irrelevant when laws do not exist to govern and protect the sustainable use of land.

There is no leadership toward empowering Aboriginal people. There has been no examination of the decline in social infrastructure that sees even the smallest country town affected by the ravages of ice, leading to dislocation and brutal acts of violence. We and our leadership seem incapable of coming to grips with child abuse, whether by institutions, government or dysfunctional families and predatory individuals.

Church leaders have failed to provide ethical or moral leadership, apparently more concerned with protecting their flock than with helping to support what should be our sectarian democracy.

Climate change denial by the Abbott Government will see Australia become part of the problem rather than helping find solutions. It has resulted in there being no national strategy for the handling and deployment of human and materiel resources for significant national and regional disasters as a result of climate change.

The media, now embedded in the political elite, has failed to adequately call the political process and leadership for what it is. Compared to how earlier generations of journalists would have handled it, Howard wasn't really called for being a racist, nor for being fast and loose with the truth. Rudd was hardly castigated for his arrogance and selfishness. Gillard wasn't called out as a hypocrite for selling out on what she maintained were her Left credentials, and Abbott wasn't really called out for being a bully, a racist, a misogynist, dissembling, erratic and an intellectual lightweight.

Myths have been woven to hide our weaknesses, to boost our low self esteem, to overcome our national inferiority complex. These myths have become self defeating in light of the need to honestly face our shortcomings and renew ourselves and our leadership. The myth of the Anzac is just that, and not something to build or sustain a nation on.

Are we really a nation of volunteers? I doubt it. We have become a nation of individuals with a sense of entitlement leading to ever increasing levels of corruption. We are prone to narcissism, jingoism and chauvinism.

It would seem that things will get worse before they get better. Already, Australians have turned away from mainstream politics; most are fed up with Tony Abbott. They see him as a clown; they are waiting for Malcolm Turnbull to take over. Few, with the exception of hardcore Labor supporters, see much prospect of Bill Shorten addressing basic and outstanding issues.

Until the Liberal Party can find the courage to replace Abbott, the country is adrift with the very real prospect of them handing power to Shorten, who hasn't a clue what to do with it. Abbott has managed, in a short space of time, to alienate many who otherwise might have been expected to vote for the Coalition.

Are we in for a growth in radical movements and expression of political opinion on both the left and the right?

Bruce Haigh is a political commentator and retired diplomat.

<http://www.abc.net.au/news/2015-04-24/haigh-if-we-were-ever-the-lucky-country-we-arent-now/6411240>

20. Gary Nunn: Politics and the Australian language

Sexism, plain talking (when it suits them) and obfuscating euphemism: politicians down under abuse language, too

The Guardian's Mind your language

Gary Nunn

Friday 24 April 2015 06.00 AEST

It's not just UK politicians who abuse the English language by consistently spouting irritating nonsense. Australian ones do too. And the result can be just as insulting to the intelligence of the electorate.

As Mind your language's #electionspeak series enters the final two weeks of the UK campaign, I'm sharing examples from Australia's most recent election.

Tony Abbott, the prime minister, campaigned successfully on a manifesto of trite, reductive, negative, patronisingly simple three-word slogans, repeated mechanically: Stop the boats. Stop the taxes. Repay the debt. No carbon tax. Burn more coal. Burn the gays. Burn baby burn. (I may have added a few.)

Another slogan, lampooned to the point that it now only exists as a satirical phrase rather than an earnest one, is Abbott's "Team Australia". Propagating the dangerously simplistic "us and them" binary, Abbott declared you're either playing for Team Australia or not. The dubious, monocultural, borderline xenophobic qualities of #teamaustralia get called out so often on Twitter it's evident most Australians would rather remain on the substitutes' bench. Remember this is the same man who refuses to allow any of his MPs to vote for his own sister's right to marry her same-sex partner – even though councillor Christine Forster is not only a family member, but a party member. Some team.

Abbott's threat to "shirtfront" Vladimir Putin following the shooting down of flight MH17 was also borrowed from the rugby field. It was voted word of the year by the Australian National Dictionary Centre and Emily Wilson, editor-in-chief of Guardian Australia. The seemingly bellicose metaphor was later downgraded to "seeking robust discussions" and then "seeking assurances", proving that this was little more than empty rhetorical posturing. Or, to put it plainly, all talk.

Plain talk can get characterised as macho language, especially when it shoots – often clumsily – from Abbott's mouth. Ironically, he is from the side of politics quick to call out "political correctness gone mad" when reasonable calls to mind our language are issued. The added qualifiers and backtracks came across as hypocritical.

Gendering political language as "male" if it's plain-speaking, succinct and blunt, and "female" if it's more diplomatic, loquacious and meandering is blatant sexism – playing on the false generalisation that women obfuscate to not offend and men are frank to not appear womanly, weak or woolly. It was undermined with biting aplomb in Julia Gillard's now legendary misogyny speech – no caveats, backtracks or litotes there, but a woman authoritatively defying Abbott's sexist attacks. These included remarks that men are more suited to exercise authority and abortion is the easy way out. His characterisation of Australian women as housewives doing the ironing, and his thinly veiled suggestion that the unmarried Gillard should "politically speaking, make an honest woman of herself" were met with: "I will not be lectured on sexism and misogyny by this man. I will not. Not now, not ever."

The Macquarie Dictionary was so inspired by this rousing and impressive speech that it ceremoniously updated its definition of misogyny, tweaking it from pathological hatred of women to an entrenched prejudice against them. Its editor is quoted as saying that it had failed to keep pace with linguistic evolution. Liberal MP Christopher Pyne – a man so odious, he redefines that word– dismissed Gillard's use of the term and Macquarie's updating as hyperbole – by, ironically, using hyperbole himself: "If Macquarie changes its definition of misogyny to something other than what it is, it undermines Macquarie Dictionary in its entirety."

Appropriately enough, Macquarie's word of the year, announced in February, was "mansplaining" – the word used to describe the condescending tone men like Australian MP Clive Palmer adopt when talking to women such as Guardian Australia journalist Lenore Taylor. "You're very naive when it comes to politics, my girl," he sniffed. Taylor noted it was an accusation "not often levelled at someone who has spent most of the past 25 years reporting on politics". It was the David Cameron-to-Angela Eagle "Calm down, dear" moment of Australian politics. It permeates political commentary in Australia. Radio personality and conservative prime ministerial speechwriter Alan Jones infamously said of female political participation: "Women are destroying the joint," which was widely mocked under #destroythejoint on Twitter.

Back to plain-speaking Abbott: here's a man who on the one hand campaigned on a ticket of plainly telling that he would not introduce new taxes or charges, but on the other used euphemisms to distort the semantics of ... introducing new taxes and charges. "Deficit levy" and "GP co-payment" were used respectively for a new tax and a (failed) new charge. He speaks plainly only when it suits.

Considering the colloquial character of Australian English, you'd expect candidness to trump polished politeness. It does, to an extent – this is the only English-speaking country I know where the media regularly undermine the egocentricity of MPs by calling them "pollies". Despite the love of unguarded sincerity, snootiness still plays a part. Before unlikely Senator Ricky Muir of the Motoring Enthusiast party was elected, he was unemployed and confessed he didn't own a suit. His frank maiden speech was applauded by Greens Senator Larissa Waters for being "beautifully human – we need more real people not from the political class here in Canberra". It was a speech widely praised by the same fickle media that sneered at him the previous week for fluffing a TV interview. It seems we only like plain speaking when it suits us, too.

This is the catch-22 pollies face: use polished but anodyne language, informed by focus groups and strangled of life by committees, advisers and speechwriters. Or be "real": unguarded, heartfelt and impassioned – but risk being shot down as shrill, uninformed or ineloquent.

Gary Nunn is a regular contributor to Mind your language. His posts appear on the last Friday of every month. @GaryNunn1

<http://www.theguardian.com/media/mind-your-language/2015/apr/23/politics-and-the-australian-language>

21. Lawyers seek to stop five-year-old with psychiatric illness being sent to Nauru

Mental health assessments state categorically that the girl, who is being held in a Darwin detention centre, should not be returned to Pacific island

The Guardian
Helen Davidson and Paul Farrell
Tuesday 21 April 2015 17.30 AEST

Lawyers for a five-year-old asylum seeker with post traumatic stress disorder held in Darwin's Wickham Point detention centre are preparing to seek an injunction to stop her being moved back to Nauru.

The girl is one of a growing number of asylum seekers who have been brought to Australia from Manus Island or Nauru with serious physical or psychological conditions.

Their stays are supposed to be temporary, but in a number of cases lawyers are preparing to take action to halt their removal.

The ABC reported the girl had displayed inappropriate sexual behaviour from her time at the Nauru detention centre.

A review by former integrity commissioner Philip Moss last month found there was evidence that sexual assaults had taken place at the detention centre.

John Lawrence SC, acting for the family, told Guardian Australia that when he visited the family and met the girl on Sunday, he asked her to write her name on a page next to his, in an effort to begin conversation.

"I wrote 'Johnny' and asked her to write her name, and she wrote her name which wasn't her name at all but was in fact her ... designation within the department, the numbers ascribed to a boat on which she arrived at Christmas Island in 2013," he said.

Lawrence then asked her to draw pictures of Nauru and she drew suns, saying it was hot. "Then she drew a stick figure which depicted a person with lips which had stitches on them and she used a red crayon to draw the stitches," Lawrence said.

Three recent psychiatric reports seen by Guardian Australia stated categorically the girl should not be sent back to Nauru. They recommended the family be given community detention, listing the girl's "supportive parents" as a protective factor.

The psychiatric assessments detailed the girl's mental health problems, including a diagnosis of post traumatic stress disorder, multiple acts of self harm, nightmares and bedwetting. A further report from a psychologist said depression and extreme anxiety were "pervasive throughout all areas of her life". One of the psychiatrist's reports said that was triggered by reminders of Nauru.

Other documents seen by Guardian Australia say the young girl was exhibiting "sexualised behaviour" at the Nauru facility last year, and her parents reported the girl had been exposed to sexualised behaviour on Christmas Island. She was seen by medical professionals on Nauru who determined "no concerns identified".

Lawrence, a criminal lawyer, is taking action in the federal court on behalf of the family to keep them in Australia after the father's medical treatment is completed.

"The first and foremost concern is the prospect of being returned to Nauru," Lawrence said.

The immigration department has repeatedly stated detainees who are brought to Australia for medical treatment are told they will be returned to the offshore detention facilities.

"The department of immigration can say that, but they also know this child is suffering from serious psychiatric illness," Lawrence said.

"We're happy to engage with the department to achieve something that is humane. The other thing that is relevant to this family's situation and the way the government deals with them, is the father has two uncles resident in Australia and living in Sydney and we're hoping the government will grant them some type of community visa.

"As a criminal lawyer of over 25 years experience I've visited all types of people in prison. To visit a prisoner in an Australian jail who is a five-year-old girl is deplorable, offensive and depressing, and it just shouldn't happen."

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

<http://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2015/apr/21/lawyers-seek-to-stop-five-year-old-with-psychiatric-illness-being-sent-to-nauru>

22. Legal action to stop 5yo asylum seeker being returned to Nauru

Legal action being taken to stop 5yo asylum seeker with PTSD in Wickham Point detention centre being returned to Nauru

ABC News Online
Exclusive by Ruby Jones
Posted Tue 21 Apr 2015, 7:23am

A five-year-old asylum seeker in a Darwin detention centre is suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and has been prescribed anti-depressants amid fears she may be sent back to Nauru, a Darwin lawyer says.

The Iranian girl drew an image of a stick-figure person with its lips sewn shut and displayed inappropriate sexual behaviour because of what she has seen or experienced while in detention in Nauru, lawyer John Lawrence said.

Mr Lawrence is taking legal action to prevent the girl and her family being sent back to Nauru.

He said she has been with her parents at Darwin's Wickham Point Detention Centre since October, after they were transferred from Nauru to Australia because her father needed urgent medical treatment.

The family had been on Nauru for more than a year and were told they would be returned there once the treatment was completed, Mr Lawrence said.

The ABC has seen a medical report, completed in Darwin, assessing the girl.

It records her fear of returning to Nauru, as well as a diagnosis of PTSD and anxiety.

"This child should not be sent back to Nauru as she continues with a significant PTSD syndrome to the exposure to traumatic events during her previous stay, with ongoing severe anxiety symptoms, and risk of self-harm," it said.

The report also records the prescribing of anti-depressant medication to the girl.

It said she was "still talking of hurting herself as per previous threats, parents are worried about when she is on her own at school, that she could hurt herself".

Mr Lawrence said he was also concerned about the possibility of abuse at Nauru.

"I have medical material relating to this five-year-old girl, which informs me that she is displaying inappropriate sexualised behaviour, as a consequence of experiences that she has either seen or experienced directly or indirectly, on Nauru," he said.

Family desperate to avoid return to Nauru

Mr Lawrence said when he visited the girl on the weekend, he took a colouring book and asked her to write her name.

"She writes her name, it is CAV 020 ... the boat number which she comes into the country with," he said.

"That is her designation now."

Mr Lawrence said he had asked the girl about Nauru.

"She said she is scared. I [asked] her to do a drawing ... the drawing depicts a figure, which has stitched lips together in red crayon," he said.

Mr Lawrence said the family had given their permission for the girl's story to be made public, because they were desperate not to be returned to Nauru.

"She is a five-year-old girl, and five-year-old girls do not go to jail, never mind an unsafe dangerous dump, which is what Nauru is," he said.

"This is obscene, this is an Australian obscenity, and not only are we paying for it, we are committing it."

Mr Lawrence said the girl's family are growing more desperate to stay in Australia.

"Our Government's plan for that young girl [is] to be returned to where she has come from, having already spent over one year in a jail facility which would be unsafe for an adult male Australian criminal," he said.

Mr Lawrence said he had begun court action against the Department of Immigration and Border Protection to stop the family's forced return.

"That is why we are injuncting [sic] the Department of Immigration, to prevent this happening, and we are also seeking a remedy that she be released, with her parents, and put into the custody — via a community visa — of uncles who live in Sydney."

In a statement, the Department of Immigration and Border Protection said "persons brought to Australia from a Regional Processing Centre (RPC) for medical reasons are clearly informed and clearly know that they will be returned to the RPC to continue their refugee assessment and processing".

"Those who are subject to regional processing arrangements will have their claims assessed in that way and will never be settled in Australia.

"The department does not comment on transfer arrangements of individuals."

<http://www.abc.net.au/news/2015-04-21/5yo-asylum-seeker-with-ptsd-in-darwin-detention/6407632>

23. Peter Dutton mentally 'torturing' 5yo asylum seeker through Nauru detention, Sarah Hanson-Young says

ABC Radio ACF - AM

By Felicity Ogilvie

Posted Thu 23 Apr 2015, 5:39am

Greens Senator Sarah Hanson-Young has accused Immigration Minister Peter Dutton of mentally torturing a child by keeping her in detention on Nauru.

The five-year-old girl is currently being held along with her parents in Darwin because of her father's poor health, but the family has been told they will be returned to Nauru once doctors have seen the man.

The girl has been diagnosed with post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) because of her experiences in the detention centre, and her father said her mental health was deteriorating.

A report from Save the Children said the child was displaying sexualised behaviour on Nauru.

"Yes, she was under [the] impression that we would be also taken to the Nauru because she could hear them, she could hear the voices from outside and was begging me to stop them from taking us back to Nauru," her father said.

"I knew that if they would have returned me, returned us back to Nauru, my child's misbehaviour would be even worse."

Senator Hanson-Young has written to Mr Dutton asking that he heed the advice of experts and move the child out of detention.

"The minister is torturing this little child and I don't use those words lightly," she said.

"We know that the detention has caused these issues for her. Her mental health has deteriorated."

The move out of Darwin and back to Nauru will happen despite mental health experts recommending the child and the family stay together and be housed in the community rather than detention.

Psychiatrist Peter Young worked until last year for International Health and Mental Services, a company contracted by the Government to provide mental health assessments to people in detention.

He said the situation was a familiar one to health professionals working in detention.

"Unfortunately ... the department will not take medical advice about what should be done in the best interests of managing people's health conditions," he said.

In a statement, Mr Dutton said Senator Hanson-Young's statement was "repugnant".

"That's a repugnant statement, even beneath Sarah Hanson-Young, particularly given that 1,200 people died at sea while the Greens were in government with Labor," he said.

Meanwhile, lawyer John Lawrence is planning action in the Federal Court to prevent the family being returned to Nauru.

"Our Government's plan for that young girl [is for her] to be returned to where she has come from, having already spent over one year in a jail facility which would be unsafe for an adult male Australian criminal," he said.

"That is why we are injuncting (sic) the Department of Immigration, to prevent this happening, and we are also seeking a remedy that she be released, with her parents, and put into the custody — via a community visa — of uncles who live in Sydney."

<http://www.abc.net.au/news/2015-04-23/dutton-accused-of-torturing-asylum-seeker-child-nauru-detention/6414140>

24. Peter Dutton calls Greens senator 'repugnant' over claims he's 'torturing' child

The Age
April 23, 2015 - 11:25AM
Heath Aston

The political brawl over children in detention has reached a new low, with Greens senator Sarah Hanson-Young and Immigration Minister Peter Dutton trading personal insults over the case of a five-year-old girl set to be returned to Nauru from Darwin.

Mr Dutton on Thursday described statements by Senator Hanson-Young as "repugnant" after she accused the minister of "torturing" the girl, who has been diagnosed with post-traumatic stress disorder.

Her PTSD is apparently the result of experiences inside the Australian-run detention centre. A report by Save the Children found she was displaying sexualised behaviour on Nauru.

Mental health experts have recommended the girl be housed in the community with her family but government officials have warned them they will be returned to Nauru.

In a letter to Mr Dutton, Senator Hanson-Young claimed the girl, who is with her parents inside the Wickham Point detention centre in Darwin while her father receives medical treatment, has also engaged in acts of self-harm, suffers nightmares, depression and extreme anxiety.

"I request that you heed the advice of experts and ensure that this child does not endure another day in detention. Continuing the child's detention in these circumstances will only result in further harm being caused," Senator Hanson-Young wrote.

She later told ABC: "The minister is torturing this little child and I don't use those words lightly. We know that the detention has caused these issues for her. Her mental health has deteriorated."

Mr Dutton responded with venom.

"That's a repugnant statement, even beneath Sarah Hanson-Young, particularly given that 1200 people died at sea while the Greens were in government with Labor."

Figures released by the Immigration Department last week show that there are now 227 children in mainland and offshore detention.

The total population of Nauru is 718 and there are 989 all-male detainees on Manus Island.

Nearly 45 per cent of the total population has spent more than 12 months in detention.

An independent review into sexual abuse inside Nauru, released in March, found evidence of rape, sexual assault of minors and guards trading marijuana for sexual favours from female detainees.

The Moss Review highlighted evidence of Nauruan guards at the detention centre trading sexual favours for marijuana and cigarettes and children being touched inappropriately.

<http://www.theage.com.au/federal-politics/political-news/peter-dutton-calls-greens-senator-repugnant-over-claims-hes-torturing-child-20150423-1mrdxb.html>

25. Pressure mounts for Immigration Minister not to return girl with PTSD to Nauru

ABC Radio CAF - TWT
Felicity Ogilvie
Friday, April 24, 2015 12:10:00

KIM LANDERS: The Immigration Minister Peter Dutton is being urged not to return a 5-year-old Iranian girl to Nauru.

The child who has PTSD (post-traumatic stress disorder) is being held in a Darwin detention centre while her father receives medical treatment there.

He says his daughter has tried to commit suicide because she fears being returned to Nauru and mental health professionals who've spoken to the girl are recommending she be moved into the community.

The Minister yesterday made some general remarks that some children can't be released into the community because their asylum seeker parents have adverse ASIO (Australian Security Intelligence Organisation) security assessments.

But the lawyer for the five year Iranian girl says he has no knowledge of that being the case for his client.

Felicity Ogilvie reports.

FELICITY OGILVIE: Describing the 5-year-old Iranian girl's case as a tragic example, more than a hundred organisations such as Amnesty International, church groups and World Vision are today calling on the Government to put a moratorium on the transfer of asylum seekers to offshore detention centres.

The groups have signed a statement prepared by the Refugee Council of Australia.

They're asking the Government not to move any more people to Nauru or Manus Island until the safety of the asylum seekers can be guaranteed.

Meanwhile, the lawyer who's acting on behalf of the family of the 5-year-old girl with PTSD is preparing a case to take to the Federal Court.

John Lawrence wants the Government to release the child from detention.

JOHN LAWRENCE: We're still in the process of gathering the affidavit material which in fact, relates to the uncles who live in Sydney who are informing us that they will sign affidavits informing us that they will willingly, happily bring the kid to their house.

So that's in the process of being gathered today.

FELICITY OGILVIE: A report from Save the Children says the 5-year-girl who's now being held in Darwin was exhibiting sexualised behaviour on Nauru.

Speaking to the ABC through an interpreter, the child's father says his daughter's mental health has been getting worse because she has seen other detainees returned to Nauru.

FATHER (translated): Because of the new development event in the centre, my child's mental status has gotten worse, a lot worse now.

FELICITY OGILVIE: Earlier this week, the Greens Senator Sarah Hanson-Young accused the Immigration Minister Peter Dutton of mentally torturing the little girl.

PETER DUTTON: That comment is even beneath Sarah Hanson-Young.

FELICITY OGILVIE: It's a comment Mr Dutton has strongly refuted yesterday before going on to suggest that an adverse ASIO security assessment might be a factor.

PETER DUTTON: We have families, for example, where there might be three children in the family that I would seek to put out in the community but ASIO has advised me that the father has an adverse security assessment.

It may be because the allegation is that he was involved in terrorism in the Middle East somewhere.

Now, I am not going to release that father into the community.

I have said to the mother, where the mother doesn't pose any threat, the children obviously don't pose any threat, that I will allow the children and the mother to move into the community, but in many of those cases the father or the mother has taken the decision that they will, including the children, stay in held detention.

Now that is the scenario that I face and if Sarah Hanson-Young is suggesting that I would release people who have adverse security assessments into the broader community then pity help the future of our country.

FELICITY OGILVIE: Mr Dutton's office says he is talking broadly about the difficulties he faces in releasing children from detention and the Government doesn't comment on individual cases like the 5-year-old girl.

The lawyer who's representing the child and her family, John Lawrence, says he has no knowledge of ASIO being involved with his clients.

JOHN LAWRENCE: All I know about him is that he's 32 years of age and he's from Tehran.

As to whether ASIO is looking at him, I don't know, but can I say this, I don't really think that's to the point because we know how badly injured this young girl is who's been in detention for over a year and we know that the Government doctors and psychologists and psychiatrists have all said that she can't be returned to Nauru and she should be released immediately into the community wherein she may be able to begin to heal.

FELICITY OGILVIE: He plans to file the matter in the Federal Court next week.

KIM LANDERS: Felicity Ogilvie reporting.

<http://www.abc.net.au/worldtoday/content/2015/s4222983.htm>

26. More than 100 organisations urge Government not to return asylum seekers to Nauru and Manus Island

ABC Radio CAF - AM

By Peta Donald

First posted Fri 24 Apr 2015, 8:26am

Updated Fri 24 Apr 2015, 8:30am

More than 100 organisations and community groups are urging the Federal Government not to return asylum seekers to Nauru and Manus Island until their safety in the detention centres can be guaranteed.

A statement signed by the organisations calls for the 200 or so asylum seekers in Australia for treatment to be allowed to stay until the Government has implemented the recommendations of two reports into allegations of physical and sexual abuse on Manus and Nauru.

UNICEF, World Vision, Oxfam, Amnesty International, churches and other religious groups are among those to sign the statement, which came after reports a five-year-old Iranian girl exhibited sexualised behaviour as a result of being held on Nauru.

The girl, who is in detention in Darwin while her father waits for medical treatment, said she had attempted suicide because she did not want to be sent back.

Paul Power from the Refugee Council of Australia said the girl should not be sent to Nauru, describing the situation as "unacceptable".

"The idea of sending a highly vulnerable five-year-old girl back to the situation in Nauru, which actually hasn't been resolved in the way that the Government has promised, is clearly unacceptable," he said.

"And ... we asked organisations over a period of less than 24 hours whether they would consider and sign on to our statement and we had more than 100 organisations do it very willingly and very quickly.

"The least the Government can do for people who are currently facing return to those two detention centres is ... ensure that all 32 recommendations are fully implemented before sending people back to a situation which otherwise would be a situation of considerable danger for the individuals."

Dutton offers payment to asylum seekers moving to Cambodia

Greens senator Sarah Hanson-Young yesterday accused Minister for Immigration Peter Dutton of torturing the girl by not removing her from detention, as psychiatrists and psychologists advised.

Mr Dutton described her comments as "repugnant" and has been trying to persuade those on Nauru to make a new life in Cambodia, offering payments understood to be worth up to \$15,000 as part of the resettlement offer.

"We have a group of people who have accepted that offer, and those people will shortly travel to Cambodia," he said.

"And we want to demonstrate that this can work and I think other people will follow, but we have made it very clear that the arrangements won't be as generous to those people who have not made the decision and have the courage, frankly, to stare down some of the trouble makers on Nauru who are trying to convince people not to take up the package to go to Cambodia."

One source told the ABC's AM program that four asylum seekers and refugees have agreed to go. Some advocates said six out of the 1,200 refugees and asylum seekers on the island had agreed to the Cambodian move.

Ian Rintoul from the Refugee Action Coalition said few would take up Mr Dutton's offer.

"I think there are very, very few people who will take up the offer," he said.

"The Government has had a long time to try and coerce and bribe refugees to accept the extraordinary amounts of money being offered."

<http://www.abc.net.au/news/2015-04-24/advocates-urge-against-return-to-offshore-detention/6417950>

27. Lawyer for 5yo girl with PTSD argues against her return to Nauru

ABC Online - Source The Drum
Updated Thu 23 Apr 2015, 4:21pm
VIDEO ONLY - Duration 12min 4sec

A five year old girl and her family are due to be sent back to Nauru despite medical advice recommending against it.

See <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2015-04-23/lawyer-for-5yo-girl-with-ptsd-argues-against-her/6416792>

28. Asylum seeker lawyers given Christmas Island access ahead of demolition plans

Lawyers for asylum seekers who were held on Christmas Island granted access after judge orders halt to demolition plans of any disused detention facilities

The Guardian
Paul Farrell
Tuesday 21 April 2015 11.20 AEST

Lawyers for asylum seekers who were held on Christmas Island are set to gain unprecedented access to the detention centre after a judge ordered any demolition plans in the island be halted.

Last week Justice Stephen Kaye in the Victorian supreme court ordered that the federal government be restrained from demolishing any buildings on Christmas Island, after it emerged the government had planned to knock down some disused detention facilities.

The class action – which is being led by the law firm Maurice Blackburn – has as its lead plaintiff a young girl who was held in detention and is making a range of claims relating to medical concerns, the impact of being held in detention and the quality of care received there.

The lawyers will argue that the federal government breached its duty of care to the girl and other asylum seekers held in the centre, which caused them serious physical and psychological harm.

A copy of the order made on 15 April, seen by Guardian Australia, granted the asylum seekers' legal team access to the Phosphate Hill Alternative Place of Detention, Construction Camp Alternative Place of Detention, the Lilac Alternative Place of Detention and the Christmas Island Detention Centre.

The judge ruled that Lilac must not be demolished before 1 May, or until it had been inspected by the plaintiff's lawyers.

The order said the commonwealth must “take all reasonable steps to facilitate the solicitors for the plaintiff” to speak to personnel on the island.

The solicitors cannot disclose any inspection evidence to people not involved in the trial, and must destroy any evidence gathered from the inspection on completion of the trial.

The government can appoint two officers to escort them on the island, and may only decline them access to parts of the centre where asylum seekers currently live when it would be an “unreasonable intrusion on the privacy” of the detainees.

Jacob Varghese, a principal at Maurice Blackburn’s class action department, said a trial was set to go ahead in August.

“This is a sad incident in Australian history and it is important in this case, and important for the nation in some sense, that we keep a good record of what happens there so we can make sure it doesn’t happen in the future,” he said.

“We became concerned that because a lot of people have been moved off Christmas Island that the government might make a move to make another use for those facilities, so we wanted to do what we could to preserve the state of that evidence.

“We’re interested in documenting the facilities that are there and how appropriate they are for children in particular.

“If these centres are demolished it would be very hard to go back in and create a record of what the conditions were like.”

The visit to the detention centre will occur within the next two weeks and will allow lawyers to survey the centre for four consecutive days.

Serco and International Health and Medical Services have been joined in the proceedings along with the commonwealth.

<http://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2015/apr/21/asylum-seeker-lawyers-given-christmas-island-access-ahead-of-demolition-plans>

29. Lawyers gain access to 'dangerous' Christmas Island compound after judge dismisses 'contrived' refusal

The Age
April 24, 2015 - 5:24PM
Bianca Hall

Lawyers have won an emergency court order allowing them to access a Christmas Island compound that is home to 12 asylum seekers, who the government claims are dangerous.

Solicitors are currently on Christmas Island gathering evidence for a class action on behalf of a 6-year-old being brought against the federal government that could affect thousands of asylum seekers.

The lawyers have been there since Monday night, and were invited to inspect White compound, but the Department of Immigration and Border Protection (DIBP) had refused to let them enter the area, home to 12 asylum seekers, arguing it could constitute a security risk.

The Commonwealth's lawyer, Richard Stanley, told the court the solicitors could be in physical danger if they entered the compound. "DIBP members aren't allowed to go in there because of the perceived danger," he said.

However, Justice Stephen Kaye said while he did not doubt these were Mr Stanley's instructions from the department, "it really does sound very contrived".

Previously, the government had claimed the lawyers should not be able to access the compound over concerns for the privacy of the men detained there.

In July last year, authorities prevented a paediatrician from examining children detained on Christmas Island to gather evidence for the case, after previously approving her visit.

Maurice Blackburn is suing the government on behalf of a girl who was just 6 years old when the class action was launched last year.

Lawyers representing the girl say she has been traumatised by her detention. They say she developed physical and mental health issues, suffered from post-traumatic stress disorder, and developed bed-wetting and stammering after being detained for more than a year and separated from her mother in that time. The girl and her parents have since been released from Christmas Island, and the government moved children off the island in December.

As well as the girl, the class action would also cover all asylum seekers who had been injured or pregnant on Christmas Island over the past three years, a figure that could run into the thousands.

The case is being brought against DIBP and the Immigration Minister. Maurice Blackburn argues that both failed in their duty of care against asylum seekers detained on the island. At the time the case was launched, the Immigration Minister was Scott Morrison. It is now Peter Dutton.

Matthew Albert, a lawyer for Maurice Blackburn, told a hastily-convened hearing at the Supreme Court of Appeal in Melbourne that a previous court order allowing solicitors' access to the Christmas Island compounds had expressly ordered DIBP staff to give three hours' notice if they felt the security situation would prevent the lawyers entering the facilities. No such notice had been given.

Last month Maurice Blackburn won a court order freezing the planned demolition of Christmas Island detention facilities, which its lawyers argued could contain evidence in their class action against the government.

Justice Kaye ordered that the solicitors be allowed to take photographs and video in the compound before 11am on Saturday.

<http://www.theage.com.au/federal-politics/political-news/lawyers-gain-access-to-dangerous-christmas-island-compound-after-judge-dismisses-contrived-refusal-20150424-1msqk8.html>

30. Boy pleads with Q&A panel to stop deportation of friend with autism

Eleven-year-old Ethan Egart expresses frustration over the imminent deportation of his friend, Tyrone, who came to Australia from the Philippines

The Guardian
Melissa Davey
Tuesday 21 April 2015 09.30 AEST

A 11-year old Australian boy angry that his 10-year-old friend faced deportation from Australia because he has autism expressed his frustration to panellists on the ABC's Q&A program on Monday night.

Asking the panel a question via video link, Ethan Egart shared the story of his friend, Tyrone, who came to Australia from the Philippines.

"On 27 April our government is going to deport a 10-year-old boy who is perfectly normal in every way," Ethan said.

"He can read and ride a bike, but he has autism. I went to after-school care with this boy and he can't speak, but he can use sign language to communicate with us.

"If he can get along with us and we can get along with him, why does he have to leave?"

Tyrone's mother is a nurse and the government had granted her a skilled working visa, but show host Tony Jones explained, "now the immigration department know he [Tyrone] has got autism, they're being deported because he may be a burden on the health system here".

The panellists included the trade minister, Andrew Robb, who is also a former parliamentary secretary to the minister for immigration and multicultural affairs.

Robb told the audience at Melbourne's Recital Centre that the immigration minister, who is currently Peter Dutton, had the authority to overturn such decisions to deport.

"In 12 months I had quite a lot of these cases [come before me]," Robb said.

"There's not one where I didn't allow the young person to stay in this country.

"The department has got a set of rules so that if someone comes into Australia and they bring someone with them ... so that they're not taking advantage, I'm not saying this women is at all ... but the department's got the rules.

"The administrative appeals tribunal has the same rules. The minister has the discretion."

Guardian Australia has contacted Dutton's office for comment.

The founder and CEO of the Young and Well Cooperative Research Centre, Associate Professor Jane Burns, said Ethan's questions showed that young people cared about issues such as disability and stigma.

Burns said her eldest son, Angus, had Down's syndrome and autism.

"He is non-verbal but he gives back to the community because it is about acceptance of disability, supporting those who are vulnerable and supporting families to look after the people that they care about," she said.

It would be wrong to send Tyrone back to the Philippines, "a country he doesn't know", she said.

<http://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2015/apr/21/boy-pleas-with-qa-panel-to-stop-deportation-of-friend-with-autism>

31. Mother facing deportation over son's autism overwhelmed by public support

Mother facing deportation over cost of son's autism overwhelmed by public support after Q&A question

ABC News Online

By Steven Schubert

Posted Sun 26 Apr 2015, 7:23am

A woman who could be deported to the Philippines with her son has said she is overwhelmed by the level of support she has received since her case was highlighted on national television.

But so far the Australian Government has not told Maria Sevilla whether she and her 10-year-old son Tyrone, who has autism, will be allowed to stay in the country.

Ms Sevilla came to Australia eight years ago to study nursing and now works at Townsville Hospital where she looks after stroke victims.

Her application for a visa which is designed to bring skilled workers to regional areas was rejected because of Tyrone's autism.

The decision by a Migration Review Tribunal cited the "significant cost to the Australian community" of health care for Tyrone.

Ms Sevilla has asked Immigration Minister Peter Dutton to consider her case, and the Department of Immigration and Border Protection is preparing a report for his consideration.

Ms Sevilla said she told Mr Dutton in that request after her initial application was rejected that she and Tyrone have private health insurance and Tyrone's doctor has offered to treat the boy for free.

A spokesperson for Mr Dutton said neither Ms Sevilla nor Tyrone would be required to leave Australia while that happens.

Ms Sevilla said she was saddened to hear her son described as a burden.

"If any parent would hear that your child is being called a burden on society I think they would know how I feel," she said.

"And because Tyrone can't communicate, he won't be able to voice out what he wants to say to those people who try to tell him he's going to be a burden to society."

Ms Sevilla's case attracted national headlines after a friend of Tyrone's raised it on the ABC's Q&A program on Monday.

Darwin boy Ethan Egart used to live in Townsville, where his mother studied nursing with Ms Sevilla, and the two boys went to the same after school care.

In his question, Ethan asked: "If he can get along with us and we can get along with him, why does he have to leave?"

Ethan described his friend as a "good kid".

"He was a nice kid, his mum was really nice and I just don't think he should get deported," he said.

"I just thought it shouldn't happen to a kid who has autism."

Since Ethan's intervention on Monday, an online petition asking Mr Dutton to allow the pair to stay has had an extra 40,000 signatures.

Ms Sevilla has been helped by the Queensland Nurses Union, which is flying her to Brisbane on Monday to present the petition to Mr Dutton's office. "I am hoping that he will give us a compassionate decision, that's our last option actually," Ms Sevilla said.

Ethan said he hoped the community's support would help sway Mr Dutton. "I hope this changes his mind and he just doesn't get deported," he said. "Make your decision, I just hope that you make the right one."

<http://www.abc.net.au/news/2015-04-26/mother-faces-deportation-autistic-son-overwhelmed-public-support/6415184>

32. Asylum seekers returned to Vietnam by Australian Navy had claims assessed at sea, UNHCR says

ABC News Online

By South East Asia correspondent Samantha Hawley

Posted Tue 21 Apr 2015, 5:00am

The United Nations refugee agency has revealed a group of Vietnamese asylum seekers had their claims assessed at sea before being returned home by the Australian Navy.

The group of 46 asylum seekers were returned by the Navy to Vietnam, and the UNHCR said they were subject to a screening process at sea.

The agency said it was seeking details from the Government about the procedures used but has expressed its concern.

A UNHCR spokeswoman said the agency considers that individuals who seek asylum must be properly and individually screened for protection in an environment where they can explain their needs, or they could be at risk of grave danger.

The ABC confirmed HMAS Choules had completed its mission to transfer the group back to Vietnam.

Another source told the ABC the 46 asylum seekers were offloaded in the port city of Vung Tau on Friday.

The asylum seekers were believed to have left Vietnam in March and were detected by the Navy earlier this month before they could reach Australia.

The Opposition has accused the Federal Government of a "new low" over secrecy surrounding the group of asylum seekers.

The Government has said it will not comment on operation matters.

<http://www.abc.net.au/news/2015-04-21/vietnam-asylum-seekers-returned-australian-navy-screened-at-sea/6407848>

33. Immigration officials screened Vietnamese asylum seekers aboard navy ship

The Age

April 22, 2015 - 2:33PM

Heath Aston

Immigration Department officials evaluated and rejected the asylum claims of 46 Vietnamese aboard an Australia navy vessel before the entire group was handed back to the Communist government last week, Fairfax Media has learned.

The on-water processing represents a new development in the Abbott government's hardline approach to border control.

A large group of Sri Lankan Tamils who were kept at sea for a month on the Customs ship Ocean Protector last year had their claims heard over the phone.

The screening by department officials aboard HMAS Choules is believed to have happened over a number of days after a single boat carrying 46 Vietnamese was intercepted north of Australia.

They were returned to southern port city of Vung Tau, south of Ho Chi Minh City last weekend. Two Defence sources confirmed to Fairfax Media that the Choules, which has been moored at Manus Island, was used in the operation.

Australian Vietnamese community leaders have warned that the Abbott government would be "throwing people back to hell" by returning asylum seekers. There were reports last year that an asylum seeker from the ethnic minority Montagnard hill tribe was badly bashed by Vietnamese government officials after being returned by Cambodia.

Amnesty International said on Wednesday that the claims of persecution by the Vietnamese cannot have been adequately assessed by government officials at sea.

"These reports are extremely concerning and represent a fundamental violation of refugee rights by the Australian government," said Amnesty refugee campaign co-ordinator Graeme McGregor.

"To prevent refugees from being returned to persecution, all asylum claims should be subjected to a fair and rigorous assessment process, with translation and legal representation offered. Basic screening procedures at sea cannot be relied upon to make such life and death decisions.

"The government has repeatedly excused its secretive boat turn-backs by trying to claim that they save lives. The return of Vietnamese asylum seekers - possible refugees - to the very country and government that they have escaped from, exposes the truth about the government's policies: that they do not save people, but repel people who may need our help.

"Instead of digging itself deeper into disrepute by negotiating secretive deals to return asylum seekers, Australia should be helping those in need and identifying safe, practical ways for refugees to reach safety."

The Human Rights Law Centre said Australia should "respect democracy and respect the rule of law" by fairly and transparently assessing asylum claims rather than "operating behind a veil of secrecy that is a deliberate subversion of both".

Immigration Minister Peter Dutton has refused to comment on the return of the Vietnamese to Vung Tau.

But on Tuesday he hinted at a "bilateral" deal with Vietnam that he did not wish to break by speaking publicly on the asylum seekers' fate.

"I'm not in a position to comment in relation to water operational matters ... we've been able to on a number of occasions, on a bilateral basis, deal with countries to get a good outcome [and] to make sure we meet our international obligations in screening people and we don't send people back to a country where we think they are going to be persecuted," he told Sky News.

"There are many aspects to this, including the bilateral relationship, which is very strong with Vietnam, very strong with other countries in the region and we respect those friendships and those relationships very much.

"These are tough decisions to take, but the last outcome I want is for the boats to restart."

Meanwhile, Mr Dutton has appeared in a video to be shown to asylum seekers on Nauru, urging them to take up the offer for them to resettle in Cambodia.

"Cambodia provides a wealth of opportunity for new settlers. It is a fast-paced and vibrant country with a stable economy and varied employment opportunities. It is a diverse nation with a blend of many nationalities, cultures and religions," Mr Dutton said in the three and a half minute video.

Immigration officials have established a hotline on Nauru for families to talk about joining the delayed flight to Phnom Penh.

Mr Dutton thanked the asylum seekers who have already agreed to resettle.

<http://www.theage.com.au/federal-politics/political-news/immigration-officials-screened-vietnamese-asylum-seekers-aboard-navy-ship-20150422-1mqo6i.html>

34. Government accused of 'new low' amid silence over reports of Vietnamese boat turn-back

ABC Radio CAF - AM

By Peta Donald

First posted Mon 20 Apr 2015, 7:14am

Updated Mon 20 Apr 2015, 8:27am

The Opposition has accused the Federal Government of a "new low" when it comes to the secrecy surrounding a group of Vietnamese asylum seekers reportedly intercepted at sea.

The Government is saying nothing about reports that an Australian Navy supply ship has returned 50 asylum seekers to Vietnam, after they were found in waters north of Australia earlier this month.

Immigration Minister Peter Dutton said he would not comment on operational matters.

"Like we don't comment on military involvement where lives are at risk, we provide information where it's possible to do so post the event. I don't provide a running commentary on these matters, that has been a longstanding practice," he said.

Opposition Immigration spokesman Richard Marles said he believed Australia may have breached international law.

"We need to hear from this Government now exactly what assessment of these individuals has taken place," he said.

"We need to have a guarantee from our Government today that every one of those people was individually assessed and that none of them require further investigation as to whether or not they are a genuine refugee.

"And we need to know and have confidence that this Government has not refoiled people against the obligations of the UN convention."

Mr Marles accused Mr Dutton of being even more secretive than the Government was last year, when it returned a group of Tamil asylum seekers at sea.

"There was at least some indication from the Government about what assessment process had been undertaken," he said.

"Right now we're hearing nothing.

"This actually represents a new low in the secrecy of this Government in terms of how it's handling the question of asylum seekers, and that is utterly inappropriate."

Greens senator Sarah Hanson-Young said Australian taxpayers deserved to know what had been going on.

"It cost more than \$1.5 million to send this group of asylum seekers back to Vietnam," she said.

"The Australian people have a right to know whether it was indeed legal."

Senator Hanson-Young said she was not convinced lives were being saved by the Government's policy to "turn back the boats".

"We may not see the drowning, we may not see the gravestones, but that's simply because we've pushed it elsewhere," she said.

A refugee advocacy group is concerned for the refugees' safety and says it is sending someone to investigate.

Trung Doan, a Vietnamese-Australian refugee advocate with a group called VOICE Australia, is trying to verify a Facebook message that claims the 50 Vietnamese asylum seekers were returned on Friday night at a port city in Vietnam's south.

"The Facebook message said that the Vietnamese asylum seekers had been taken back to the Bung Tow province and they had been taken into Vietnam by the Vietnamese authorities," he said.

"I hope that my friend can also go to the local detention centre to speak to locals near the local detention centre and hear what they have to say."

He said he was not surprised to hear of asylum seekers fleeing Vietnam, and had heard the stories of some who had already made it to Australia.

"One was [fleeing] because he was involved in a church group," he said.

"Another was because they protested against officials confiscating their land.

"And then another, who hasn't got to Australia yet ... [is] a blogger who tried to blog about democracy, and had to flee Vietnam but hasn't got to Australia.

"They are hiding in Thailand at the moment."

<http://www.abc.net.au/news/2015-04-20/government-criticised-over-boat-secrecy/6404950>

35. Peter Dutton hints at deal with Vietnam to accept return of asylum seekers

Sydney Morning Herald
April 21, 2015 - 5:51PM
Heath Aston

Immigration Minister Peter Dutton has indicated that a "bilateral" deal in which Vietnam is believed to have accepted the return of 50 asylum seekers intercepted by the Australian Navy last week includes the government not talking about the swap.

Mr Dutton said he could not comment on reports that Australian Navy ship HMAS Choules last week travelled to a port city south of Ho Chi Minh City to hand over the group of Vietnamese.

Their boat is believed to have made it to somewhere north of Australia before being stopped.

When pressed, Mr Dutton raised the relationship with Vietnam for his inability to comment.

"I'm not in a position to comment in relation to water operational matters ... we've been able to on a number of occasions, on a bilateral basis, deal with countries to get a good outcome [and] to make sure we meet our international obligations in screening people and we don't send people back to a country where we think they are going to be persecuted," he told Sky News on Tuesday.

"There are many aspects to this, including the bilateral relationship, which is very strong with Vietnam, very strong with other countries in the region and we respect those friendships and those relationships very much.

"These are tough decisions to take, but the last outcome I want is for the boats to restart."

Fairfax Media reported over the weekend that Australia's Vietnamese community had received reports that asylum seekers had been landed in Vung Tau, a coastal city in the south.

On Friday, Thang Ha, president of the Vietnamese Community in Australia, NSW Chapter, said the Abbott government should be aware it could be "throwing people back into hell" by returning them to Vietnam.

A report published last year by the leading international group Human Rights Watch found that "the human rights situation in Vietnam deteriorated significantly in 2013, worsening a trend evident for several years".

It said that the year was marked by "a severe and intensifying crackdown on critics, including long prison terms for many peaceful activists whose 'crime' was calling for political change".

Mr Dutton also insisted on Tuesday that a delayed flight carrying refugees from Nauru to Cambodia for resettlement would go ahead and asylum seeker advocates should not try to influence those on Nauru not to accept relocation because they will never make to it Australia.

<http://www.smh.com.au/federal-politics/political-news/peter-dutton-hints-at-deal-with-vietnam-to-accept-return-of-asylum-seekers-20150421-1mq48m.html>

36. Fears returned Vietnamese asylum seekers are being grilled in police detention

The Age
April 23, 2015 - 6:37PM
Heath Aston

Asylum seekers who were returned to Vietnam by the Australian Navy last week are believed to be being interrogated at a police-run detention centre in a coastal province north of Ho Chi Minh City.

According to sources in the Australian Vietnamese community, all adults who were on-board a boat intercepted somewhere north of Australia have been detained for questioning for the past week.

It is also believed that they left southern Vietnam in March – meaning Australian authorities potentially kept the group detained for weeks while their asylum claims were screened by Immigration Department officials on-board the HMAS Choules.

They were handed over to officials in Vung Tau, a southern port city, last Friday. Immigration Minister Peter Dutton confirmed for the first time on Thursday that 46 people had been returned.

A group of Tamils was kept on-board the Customs ship Ocean Protector for a month last year as the Abbott government tried to convince India to accept the Sri Lankan natives back.

The information about the group of 46 who left southern Vietnam has come via a Vietnamese asylum seeker currently inside a detention centre in Australia. Her nephew was on the intercepted boat.

Some members of the Vietnamese community in Melbourne were aware of the group's plans to head to Australia by boat in March, Fairfax Media has learnt.

According to information relayed to Australia this week, the adults who were taken back to Vietnam on HMAS Choules are being held at a detention centre in the province of Binh Thuan while a number of minors have been released.

Separately, Anoop Sukumaran from the Asia Pacific Refugee Rights Network in Bangkok said he had received reports that the group were still in police custody but could not confirm the information they are being held in Binh Thuan.

"We have heard something similar," he told Fairfax Media.

The group was handed over to Vietnamese officials in Vung Tau, about 100 kilometres south east of Ho Chi Minh City. Phan Thiet, the provincial capital of Binh Thuan, is more than 200 kilometres east of Ho Chi Minh.

According to the state-run Bin Thuan Online, there is a "temporary police detention centre" in Phan Thiet. The publication boasted in August 2013 about how "ebullient and aggressive" youth had been "enlightened" by the centre's police superintendents before being released as part of a national amnesty.

"Amid the joyful atmosphere of the nationwide amnesty under the State President's decision, the temporary detention centre of Binh Thuan Police solemnly held ceremony to announce amnesty decision to offenders who had good behaviors [sic] during the process of doing porridge," it states.

Trong Doan, a Vietnamese Australian refugee advocate and former community leader, said it was no secret that detention centres and re-education camps were used across Vietnam to interrogate suspected political subversives.

He said it was likely that security officials would be sent to Binh Thuan from Hanoi, the Communist Party capital in the north of the country.

"What usually happens is people are asked the same question again and again and again. If people are charged they will go to prison. The Communist Party runs the courts. They run everything, all the newspapers and all the NGOs," he said.

Mr Doan said Vietnamese Australians were concerned at the secrecy that has surrounded the hand-back. "This type of secrecy is normally reserved for terrorism and national security not for a group of people who are tired and weak on a boat journey."

Amnesty International has said that the asylum claims of the Vietnamese cannot have been adequately assessed and determined by government officials at sea.

Mr Dutton, who publicly thanked the Vietnamese government on Thursday, said last year's High Court decision mean Australia was within its rights to screen people at sea and said he was satisfied those returned would not face state persecution.

"We can't trace people back through countries for the rest of their natural life – that hasn't happened under any program. But we assure ourselves of the fact that people aren't returning to persecution or to a difficult situation," he said.

"We have worked with the Vietnamese in relation to this issue and I want to say thank you to the Vietnamese government for the constructive way in which they have been able to work with us. We have been able safely return those 46 people to Vietnam."

<http://www.theage.com.au/federal-politics/political-news/fears-returned-vietnamese-asylum-seekers-are-being-grilled-in-police-detention-20150423-1mrxyb.html>

37. Refugee transfer to Cambodia delayed by 'logistical issues', says Peter Dutton

The immigration minister says Australia is negotiating with the Cambodian government and that transfers 'won't be far off'

The Guardian
Paul Farrell
Monday 20 April 2015 11.27 AEST

The immigration minister, Peter Dutton, said plans to move the first group of refugees from Nauru to Cambodia had been delayed due to "logistical issues" surrounding the involvement of Cambodian officials.

Last week letters were distributed by Australian immigration staff to refugees on Nauru offering them a settlement package in Cambodia. A spokesman for the International Organisation for Migration has confirmed it was sending an official in anticipation of movements.

Guardian Australia understands a small number of refugees on the island have taken up the offer of resettlement.

Dutton told ABC radio on Monday: "There is a lot of misinformation around from people trying to disrupt this process. Now there will be people that will travel from Nauru to Cambodia. There are some within the community that are trying to pressure people not to take up this offer.

"It's very important to understand that we are obviously discussing and negotiating with the Cambodian government. There are logistical issues with officials from Cambodia being involved in the process. If that's forced a delay of a couple of days then so be it."

He added that the transfers "won't be far off" and said the government was having discussions "with a large number of people on Nauru at the moment".

On Sunday up to 700 people may have drowned when a boat sank on the Mediterranean. Dutton was asked about the federal government's approach to stopping asylum seeker vessels and said: "A large part of that success has been us being able to turn boats around when it is safe to do so. So I think we've got a very serious issue on our hands and if we allow the boats to restart then we will see deaths at sea."

On Friday reports also emerged in the West Australian newspaper that a navy vessel had turned back a Vietnamese asylum seeker vessel.

The federal government has adopted a policy of secrecy surrounding asylum seeker operations, and Dutton said he did not have "any public comment to make in relation to that matter".

"At an appropriate time, if we deem that we can release details publicly, we will do that, but I don't have any information to confirm or deny that," he said.

<http://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2015/apr/20/refugee-transfer-to-cambodia-delayed-by-logistical-issues-says-peter-dutton>

38. Peter Dutton denies claims refugees are snubbing resettlement in Cambodia

Logistical issues could take a few days to sort out but some on Nauru want to start new lives in a new country, immigration minister says

The Guardian
Australian Associated Press
Monday 20 April 2015 10.02 AEST

Peter Dutton has insisted plans to send the first batch of refugees from Nauru to Cambodia are on track and rejected claims there was a lack of interest.

"There are some within the community at the moment trying to pressure people not to take up the offer, but that is just prolonging their period on Nauru," the immigration minister told ABC Radio on Monday.

Dutton said logistical issues could take a few days to sort out but he was adamant there were people who wanted to start their lives afresh in the south-east Asian country.

He refused to comment on reports Australia had forcibly returned 50 asylum seekers to Vietnam. An Australian navy ship reportedly travelled to Vietnam late last week as part of a secret border operation. Dutton told the ABC he would release details at an appropriate time.

The opposition immigration spokesman, Richard Marles, said the minister's secrecy represented a new low. He called on Dutton to explain what assessments of claims by asylum seekers had taken place and to guarantee they were undertaken individually.

"We need to have confidence that this government has not refoiled people against the obligations of the UN convention," Marles told the ABC.

Dutton also reiterated that Iranian asylum seekers would not be settled in Australia despite Tehran refusing to accept the forcible return of their citizens. He said the government had been specific about plans not to allow asylum seekers who came by boat to settle in Australia and would return people to their country of origin where possible.

The foreign minister, Julie Bishop, during weekend talks in Tehran, did not convince Iran to take back deported asylum seekers but managed to win agreement for their voluntary return.

<http://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2015/apr/20/peter-dutton-denies-claims-refugees-are-snubbing-resettlement-in-cambodia>

39. UN refugee agency wants no part of Cambodia resettlement

The Age
April 20, 2015 - 5:49PM
Lindsay Murdoch

Bangkok: The United Nations agency responsible for refugees has washed its hands of Australia's controversial deal to send refugees from the tiny Pacific island of Nauru to Cambodia.

A spokesperson for the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) has told Fairfax Media the agency will play no role in resettling refugees who have agreed to give up their hopes of life in Australia to resettle in one of the world's poorest nations.

While Australia had said the first group of up to 10 refugees on Nauru were expected to be flown to Cambodia "in the near future", on Monday night a spokesperson for Immigration Minister Peter Dutton conceded that "a Cambodian government

delegation is currently travelling to Nauru ... They will be helping to progress arrangements for the first group of refugees to be transferred to Cambodia."

That statement came after Koy Kuong, a spokesman for Cambodia's foreign ministry, told The Phnom Penh Post that they had no knowledge of any plane being booked to carry the refugees.

Instead, he said, a delegation from Cambodia would travel to Nauru this week to assess the possible applications of a small number of refugees to relocate to Cambodia.

Phnom Penh has insisted on vetting those who agree to relocate and that all must be deemed genuine refugees fleeing a well-founded fear of persecution in their home countries.

Khieu Sopheak, a spokesman for Cambodia's interior ministry, told The Cambodia Daily that no arrivals were imminent and that as far as Cambodia knew no refugees had volunteered to make the move.

"It's not true," he said of the claims that refugees would be arriving within days.

Mr Dutton had earlier denied there was a lack of interest among refugees on Nauru in resettling in Cambodia.

"There are some within the community at the moment trying to pressure people not to take up the offer, but that is just prolonging their period on Nauru," he told the ABC.

Mr Dutton said logistical issues with Cambodian officials could take a few days to sort out but he was adamant there were people who wanted to start their life afresh in the South-east Asian nation.

Both the Australian and Cambodian governments said last year that they were relying on the UNHCR, which has an office in the Cambodian capital Phnom Penh, to help implement the resettlement program.

"We are not playing a role in this relocation and our staffing structure in Phnom Penh remains unchanged," a UNHCR spokesperson said.

When the deal with Cambodia was announced in September last year, then immigration minister Scott Morrison - who sipped champagne at the ceremony - said that "both governments" were "working closely to ensure the smooth and successful implementation of this arrangement in cooperation with the UNHCR".

But the UNHCR said at the time that it was "deeply concerned" at the precedent set by the agreement, which has also been condemned by Cambodia's opposition parties, human rights groups and refugee advocates.

"Refugees are persons fleeing persecution or the life-threatening effects of armed conflict," said UNHCR commissioner Antonio Guterres. "They are entitled to better treatment than being shipped from one country to the next."

The UNHCR has consistently advocated for asylum seekers to have their claims assessed and to benefit from protection in the territory of the state where they arrive or which has jurisdiction over them.

The United Nations Children's Fund (Unicef) has also raised concerns about the agreement, saying Australia is violating the rights of children who would be taken to Cambodia.

Australia, Cambodia and Nauru have asked the International Organisation for Migration (IOM), an organisation funded by 157 member states, to provide some of the support that would normally have been provided by the UNHCR.

The IOM agreed after setting out conditions that included the refugees would receive sufficient funding to allow them to become self-reliant and to have access to health care, education and jobs.

Refugee advocates believe the Australian government is offering up to \$15,000 cash and tens of thousands of dollars in other support to the first refugees who agree to go to Cambodia, in addition to \$40 million in additional aid to Cambodia.

But Cambodian officials say claims made by Australia to the refugees in a supposed "fact sheet" on the resettlement plans have caused "confusion" in Phnom Penh, including that the first group would depart Nauru on a plane booked for Cambodia as early as Monday.

The document distributed on the island also made the exaggerated claims that Cambodia "does not have problems with violent crime or stray dogs", contradicting a US report that violence was at a "critical level" in the country.

<http://www.theage.com.au/world/un-refugee-agency-wants-no-part-of-cambodia-resettlement-20150420-1mp07i.html>

40. Cambodia says no refugee arrivals imminent, contradicting Peter Dutton

Spokesman for Cambodia's interior ministry says a delegation left for Nauru on Monday but 'we don't know anyone who volunteered so far'

The Guardian
Paul Farrell
Monday 20 April 2015 18:18 AEST

Cambodian officials have confirmed they are sending a delegation to Nauru to discuss settlement plans, but have said no arrivals were imminent from the island, contradicting comments by Australia's immigration minister, Peter Dutton.

Last week letters were distributed by Australian immigration staff to refugees on Nauru offering them a settlement package in Cambodia. A spokesman for the International Organisation for Migration has confirmed it was sending an official in anticipation of movements.

Small protests have also occurred in the refugee community living on Nauru surrounding the Cambodia arrangement. One 12-year-old boy also attempted to throw himself into the ocean in an apparent attempt to self-harm.

While the transfer of refugees for settlement from Nauru to Cambodia was scheduled to leave on Monday, the move has faced delays, in part due to the arrival of Cambodian officials.

On Monday, Dutton also said there were logistical issues with officials from Cambodia. He added that if it had "forced a delay of a couple of days then so be it".

Khieu Sopheak, a spokesman for Cambodia's interior ministry, told the Phnom Penh Post that a delegation was en route on Monday to Nauru.

But he also contradicted Dutton's comments about the transfers, and said that no arrivals were imminent from Nauru.

"We have received a request from the embassy and [the interior minister, Sar] Kheng has already ordered the immigration department to send officials to Nauru, either [yesterday] or [today], depending on the availability of plane tickets.

"We don't know anyone [who] volunteered so far," he said.

Another official from the foreign ministry, Koy Kuong, said officials "were confused by the Australian side", and the comments contained in a letter to refugees that said flights could begin as early as Monday.

Dutton told ABC radio that Australia had approached "a large number of people on Nauru" for potential resettlement.

The memorandum of understanding between Cambodia and Australia says that Cambodia will offer permanent settlement to people who have "undergone a refugee status determination process in the republic of Nauru and have been determined to be a refugee, and meet the entry and settlement requirements of the kingdom of Cambodia".

They must be found to be refugees, have made a voluntary decision to go to Cambodia and must have their applications considered by Cambodian officials.

The settlement push for Cambodia has faced heavy criticism from human rights groups. Unicef says Australia would be violating the rights of children if transfers to Cambodia went ahead.

<http://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2015/apr/20/cambodia-says-no-refugee-arrivals-imminent-contradicting-peter-dutton>

41. Just one refugee on Nauru agrees to Cambodia resettlement

The Age
April 23, 2015 - 10:11PM
Lindsay Murdoch
With Kevin Ponniah

Phnom Penh: Only one refugee among hundreds on the tiny Pacific island of Nauru has so far has agreed to resettle in impoverished Cambodia, a senior Cambodian official says.

The man is a Rohingya who fled Myanmar hoping to reach Australia.

"We have received only one volunteer ... and our team is now working with our Australian counterparts," said General Khieu Sopheak, a spokesman for Cambodia's Interior Ministry.

Australia's Immigration Minister Peter Dutton denied early this week Australian officials were struggling to convince refugees to take up Australia's offer to start a new life in Cambodia that includes cash payments of up to \$15,000, accommodation, training and other support.

Cambodia is one of Asia's poorest nations with a poor record of human rights.

Mr Dutton has complained that refugees are being pressured by others on the island not to accept Australia's offer to relocate which has been criticised by Cambodia's opposition parties and human rights and refugee advocate groups.

Rohingya are a Muslim minority in Myanmar, which is also called Burma. They have been described by the United Nations as among the world's most persecuted people.

General Sopheap told Fairfax Media that officials from Australia and Nauru are still working together to find refugees who will to resettle in Cambodia. He said Cambodian officials on the island were meeting with possible volunteers and reporting back to the Department of Immigration in Phnom Penh.

He told the Cambodia Daily the lone volunteer would stay on Nauru "until he gets the green light" after vetting by Cambodian officials who have been on the island this week.

"We do not know his background yet," said Kerm Sarin, who heads the refugee office at Cambodia's Interior Ministry.

"Once we have checked his background and health ... and once we [know] that he has not committed any crimes and does not use drugs ... then we will inform him that he can come to live in our country."

Cambodian officials said they did not know how long it would be before the man arrived in Cambodia.

Under Cambodia's agreement with Australia, Cambodia has the right to reject any refugees who agree to give up their hopes of reaching Australia and to resettle in Cambodia.

Australian officials on Nauru have been engaged in a hard-sell campaign to about 480 refugees on the island that critics say exaggerates conditions in Cambodia.

A recent United States report described violent crime in the country as being at a "critical level".

In a video message to refugees Mr Dutton told them that under no circumstances would they be able to live in Australia.

"Cambodia offers you safety, security and opportunity," he said. Mr Dutton also thanked "those" refugees who had agreed to resettlement in Cambodia, seemingly ignoring the fact that only one person had agreed.

Ian Rintoul, of the Refugee Action Coalition, said he believed Australia was also now trying to convince asylum-seekers still in detention to move to Cambodia due to a lack of interest from processed refugees living in Nauruan communities.

"I believe they are [trying to convince detained asylum-seekers]. That video [from Immigration Minister Peter Dutton] can only be shown in detention. There is no way to show it to the refugees," he said.

Australia's agreement with Cambodia specifies that only processed refugees will be given the resettlement option.

<http://www.theage.com.au/world/just-one-refugee-on-nauru-agrees-to-cambodia-resettlement-20150423-1mrq17.html>

42. Iranian asylum seeker agrees to resettle in Cambodia from Nauru, refugee advocate's messages say

ABC News Online

By political reporter Dan Conifer

First posted Fri 24 Apr 2015, 3:06am

Updated Fri 24 Apr 2015, 3:12am

An asylum seeker held on Nauru has agreed to resettle in Cambodia, according to messages seen by the ABC.

Cambodia has agreed to take refugees from Nauru who tried to reach Australia by boat.

The first charter flight to Phnom Penh was expected to leave as early as Monday.

The ABC has seen a Facebook conversation an advocate said is with a male Iranian asylum seeker, who said he approached officials wanting to take the deal.

The man said he has been told he will depart soon, pending his refugee determination.

"I don't know how many person they will go to Cambodia," one message reads.

"They said very soon you go.

"I don't know what time they will send me."

The Cambodian arrangement is for refugees and does not extend to those whose claims have not been processed.

Advocates say up to six people interested or have agreed to go

A Burmese refugee has also reportedly agreed to resettle in Cambodia, according to local media reports.

The Federal Government is not saying how many people have agreed to move or when they will depart.

The Cambodia Daily has quoted a Cambodian official saying the ethnic Rohingya man has volunteered to go.

"They have the refugee status already and he volunteered to come, through the verification of our Cambodian team," Cambodian interior ministry spokesman Khieu Sopheak was quoted as saying.

"We have received only one volunteer and our team is now working with our Australian counterparts."

Advocates claim up to six people have expressed interest or agreed to resettle, and say the people are from Iran, Myanmar and Sri Lanka.

The Federal Government is increasing efforts to convince people on Nauru to leave.

A video from Immigration Minister Peter Dutton is being played one-on-one to refugees and asylum seekers on Nauru, and on public monitors, warning they may get less resettlement support if they are not in the first group.

The Federal Government has offered resettlement packages including cash, help to find work, transitional housing, language training, and health insurance.

"This package will assist refugees to establish new lives in Cambodia and is available to those who decide to travel as part of the first group to Cambodia," the pre-recorded message said.

"There's no guarantee that this level of support will be offered to people who wait and do not commit to this first group."

Calls and messages to the minister's office were not returned on Thursday night.

<http://www.abc.net.au/news/2015-04-24/iranian-asylum-seeker-agrees-to-resettle-cambodia-advocate-says/6417304>

43. One refugee from Myanmar volunteers to leave Nauru for Cambodia, local media reports

ABC News Online

By political reporter Dan Conifer

First posted Thu 23 Apr 2015, 3:48pm

Updated Thu 23 Apr 2015, 4:00pm

One refugee being held on Nauru has reportedly agreed to resettle in Cambodia.

The Cambodia Daily has quoted an official as saying the ethnic Rohingya man from Myanmar has volunteered to go.

Cambodian Interior Ministry spokesman Khieu Sopheak said a delegation in Nauru confirmed the man will move, but did not know when the man would arrive.

"They have the refugee status already and he volunteered to come, through the verification of our Cambodian team," General Sopheak has been quoted as saying.

"We have received only one volunteer and our team is now working with our Australian counterparts."

"He will stay there until he gets the green light."

The Australian Government has declined to comment on the report, and the ABC has also tried to contact General Sopheak.

The Federal Government has an arrangement for Cambodia to take refugees from Nauru who tried to reach Australia by boat.

Yesterday, Immigration Minister Peter Dutton said it was not confirmed when refugees would begin to be resettled.

But Mr Dutton said a number of people had given "positive indications" about being in the first group to depart.

He said travel documents were being arranged and preparations in Cambodia were continuing.

<http://www.abc.net.au/news/2015-04-23/one-refugee-volunteers-to-leave-nauru-for-cambodia-reports/6416606>

44. One refugee on Nauru takes up resettlement offer, says Cambodian official

Australian Greens and Human Rights Watch say Abbott government is misleading refugees about life in Cambodia in a bid to convince them to relocate

The Guardian

Paul Farrell

Thursday 23 April 2015 14.28 AEST

Just one refugee on Nauru has taken up the Australian government's offer to settle Cambodia, according to a Cambodian official.

A Cambodian interior ministry spokesman Khieu Sopheak told the Cambodia Daily that a Rohingya man was so far the only refugee who had taken up the offer.

"We have received only one volunteer ... and our team is now working with our Australian counterparts," Sopheak said.

On Wednesday Guardian Australia revealed the immigration minister had prepared a video message asking refugees to take up the government's offer of settlement in Cambodia. The video was scheduled to be played to refugees and asylum seekers on Nauru on Wednesday afternoon.

Greens senator Sarah Hanson-Young said Peter Dutton's video sent to refugees on Nauru asking them to settle in Cambodia "smacks of desperation."

Dutton told the ABC on Thursday the government had received "positive indications" from refugees who wanted to take up settlement and said the government would make an announcement "in due course" on the date of departure.

Hanson-Young said the video was misleading refugees about life in Cambodia.

"We know that the Cambodian government can barely look after its own people, let alone protect the rights of refugees," she said.

"Forcing refugees to choose between a life of torment on Nauru or a life of poverty in Cambodia is atrocious. Peter Dutton is simply putting these families in a desperate lose-lose situation.

"The Abbott government should stop scrambling around trying to fix the unfixable and just give up on this ill-fated refugee deal."

Elaine Pearson, the Australian director of Human Rights Watch, described the video as a "misinfomercial".

"It makes Australia look ignorant or seriously misinformed when Cambodia – an authoritarian, poor and corrupt nation is described as a country offering you "safety, security and opportunity".

"Seeing Dutton's audacious performance in that misinfomercial is a bit like watching the shopping channel where you get a free set of steak knives, but Dutton is peddling people's futures here.

"At one point, Dutton claims going to Cambodia is a 'choice', in the next breath, it is the 'only long-term settlement option'. Bullying people into going to Cambodia will have long-lasting consequences, especially when people realise the Cambodian dream they've been sold is not what it's cracked up to be."

The minister's video and a fact sheet distributed to refugees and asylum seekers last week lauds Cambodia's security and safety.

The government's own travel advice to Australians who are considering travelling to Cambodia warns of the risks of assaults, armed robberies and of the "very poor quality" of medical and health services.

<http://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2015/apr/23/refugee-advocates-label-peter-duttons-cambodia-video-a-misinfomercial>

45. Nauru refugees who resist resettlement in Cambodia may get less assistance

Nauru refugees who resist resettlement in Cambodia may get less assistance, Immigration Minister Peter Dutton says

ABC News Online

By political reporter Dan Conifer

First posted Wed 22 Apr 2015, 3:59pm

Updated Wed 22 Apr 2015, 6:11pm

Immigration Minister Peter Dutton has made a personal pitch for refugees on Nauru to relocate to Cambodia, warning they may receive less resettlement support if they wait.

The first group to Cambodia was due to leave Monday but is yet to depart.

Australia has an arrangement with Cambodia to take people from Nauru who are found to be refugees.

The Federal Government has offered resettlement packages including cash, help to find work, transitional housing, language training, and health insurance.

In the pre-recorded video, Mr Dutton said assistance may be cut for those leaving later.

"Settlement support will also be provided to assist you to settle into Cambodia and integrate into the Cambodian community," he said.

"You will be able to establish yourself and your family in a safe and stable environment on a permanent basis.

"This package will assist refugees to establish new lives in Cambodia and is available to those who decide to travel as part of the first group to Cambodia.

"There's no guarantee that this level of support will be offered to people who wait and do not commit to this first group."

It is understood the video is being shown to people one-on-one, and displayed on monitors in the detention centre.

The ABC last week reported up to 10 refugees could be on board the first charter flight to Phnom Penh.

The Government has not said when the plane will depart but Mr Dutton said, "plans are well underway for the first group of refugees to travel and settle in Cambodia."

Please call the Cambodia settlement hotline: Dutton

"Cambodian settlement presents a great opportunity for refugees to move forward and begin the next phase of their lives in a country that is free from persecution," Mr Dutton said in the video.

"Cambodia provides a wealth of opportunity for new settlers. It is a fast-paced and vibrant country with a stable economy and varied employment opportunities. It is a diverse nation with a blend of many nationalities, cultures and religions.

"Please take advantage of the Cambodia settlement hotline on 558 6049. Call and speak to my staff and find out more about settlement in Cambodia," referring to a hotline set up for refugees and asylum seekers on Nauru.

<http://www.abc.net.au/news/2015-04-22/nauru-refugees-who-resist-resettlement-to-get-less-help-dutton/6413366>

46. Nauru refugees resettling in Cambodia; 'Numbers, flight details not finalised'

Preparations continuing ahead of Nauru refugees resettling in Cambodia; Numbers, flight details not finalised, Peter Dutton says

ABC News Online

By political reporter Dan Conifer

First posted Wed 22 Apr 2015, 10:01pm

Updated Wed 22 Apr 2015, 10:58pm

The Federal Government says it has not confirmed when refugees will be resettled from Nauru to Cambodia, days after the first group was set to depart.

Australia has an arrangement with the south east Asian nation to resettle those on Nauru who are found to be refugees.

The first group bound for Cambodia was due to leave Monday.

Immigration Minister Peter Dutton said travel documents were being arranged and a number of people had given "positive indications" about being in the first group to depart.

But he said the number of people leaving was yet to be finalised as were the flight details, and preparations in Cambodia were continuing.

"We are working with people to identify job opportunities, to put in place packages that will help them with education with health, with the necessities to start a new life in Cambodia," Mr Dutton said.

"We are in the middle of organising logistics, travel documents, all of that which takes time when you are dealing with two countries separate to Australia.

"We will work through those logistical issues and we will have an announcement to make in due course in terms of the arrangements and number of people and the date of departure."

Advocates scaring refugees: Dutton

The ABC was previously told up to 10 refugees could leave Nauru for Phnom Penh.

"We have already had positive indications from a number of people and we are working with others," Mr Dutton said.

But the Minister said it was a "cruel hoax" refugee advocates were telling people not to accept resettlement.

"People are in two minds, on the edges, at the moment because they are being scared by refugee advocates, and some people causing mischief on Nauru, and that needs to come to an end," Mr Dutton said.

"These people are not coming to Australia."

Refugees who resist resettlement may get less assistance: Dutton

A video message from Peter Dutton is being played to refugees and asylum seekers on Nauru, warning they may get less resettlement support if they are not in the first group.

"This package will assist refugees to establish new lives in Cambodia and is available to those who decide to travel as part of the first group to Cambodia," the message said.

"There's no guarantee that this level of support will be offered to people who wait and do not commit to this first group."

Labor and the Greens were not available for comment.

<http://www.abc.net.au/news/2015-04-23/refugees-yet-to-depart-nauru-for-cambodia/6414034>

47. Peter Dutton in video plea to Nauru refugees to call 'Cambodia settlement hotline'

Immigration minister touts a 'fast-paced and vibrant country with a stable economy' in film to be shown to asylum seekers in detention centre

The Guardian

Paul Farrell

Wednesday 22 April 2015 14.45 AEST

The immigration minister, Peter Dutton, has pleaded with refugees on Nauru to take up a settlement package to Cambodia, encouraging them to call a "Cambodia settlement hotline" in a video message obtained by Guardian Australia.

In the video, which was due to be shown to asylum seekers at the Nauru detention centre on Wednesday afternoon, the minister touts Cambodia's "wealth of opportunities" and diversity.

On Wednesday Guardian Australia reported that Australian immigration officials had approached asylum seekers in the Nauru detention centre about resettlement in Cambodia, apparently in contravention of the agreement between the two countries.

Their memorandum of understanding specifies that only people whose claim for refugee status has been approved would be eligible for the transfer.

Standing beside an Australian flag in his office for the video, Dutton says a settlement package offered to those on the first flight – including health, education and accommodation costs – may not be available to those who subsequently accept a transfer.

“You will know by now that plans are well under way for the first group of refugees to travel and settle in Cambodia,” he says. “Cambodian settlement presents a great opportunity for refugees to move forward and begin the next phase of their lives in a country that is free from persecution.

“Cambodia provides a wealth of opportunity for new settlers. It is a fast-paced and vibrant country with a stable economy and varied employment opportunities. It is a diverse nation with a blend of many nationalities, cultures and religions.”

The immigration department has set up a hotline for refugees and asylum seekers on Nauru. Dutton advises them in the video to “please take advantage of the Cambodia settlement hotline on 558 6049. Call and speak to my staff and find out more about resettlement in Cambodia.”

The minister says: “I want to thank those of you who have shown the courage to stand up and be included in the first flight to Cambodia, despite the divisive actions of a few who are intent on damaging the arrangement and ruining the chances of others for a new life in a new country.

“My staff in Nauru have arrangements in place so that you can agree to take up the settlement offer without fear. I would encourage you very strongly to talk to them about this.”

<http://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2015/apr/22/peter-dutton-in-video-plea-to-nauru-refugees-to-call-cambodia-settlement-hotline>

48. Refugees sent from Nauru to Cambodia may join others in lining up to leave

As locals question the value of the \$40m resettlement deal, refugees in Phnom Penh face dim prospects and say the one thing they want is a way out

The Guardian
Lauren Crothers in Phnom Penh
Monday 20 April 2015 11.45 AEST

When refugees are sent to Cambodia over the coming days, as an official document circulated on Nauru last week indicated could happen this week, they will be trading the open-air detention of the South Pacific isle for new and unfamiliar surroundings.

The primer letter sells Cambodia as a place where violent crime and stray dogs are of no concern and cash-in-hand incentives for volunteer refugees will be handed out. But in a city where opulent mansions sprout up alongside scenes of incredible poverty, one of the challenges facing the new arrivals will be to find their own place between these two poles.

Fourteen years after stepping off a Chinese fishing boat in the port city of Sihanoukville, 55-year-old Somali refugee Abdulkadir Dahir Muse is still trying to find his.

“I speak Khmer, but it’s difficult,” he says of his attempts to familiarise himself with Cambodia and life in Phnom Penh. “I don’t want to stay here.”

Muse, who carries with him his UNHCR refugee status card at all times, describes being unable to get a job and going hungry on a regular basis.

He would like to resettle somewhere else, but his attempts to do so have yet to bear fruit. Of the \$80 he says he is given every month by the Phnom Penh arm of the UNHCR, \$40 goes on renting a small room in the Kilometre 5 part of the city. He says he also gets a small commission when he gets people to visit a cafe near the gleaming al-Serkal mosque in Phnom Penh’s Boeng Kak neighbourhood.

“I’ve experienced discrimination,” he adds, gesturing to describe times when men have relieved themselves on his doorstep.

His is not an uncommon scenario, says Denise Coghlan, director of the Jesuit Refugee Service in the Cambodian capital. She estimates that about 90% of the refugees who end up in Cambodia “have either expressed that [they want to leave], have been resettled, or have run away”.

Many cite the desire for a proper education for themselves and their children, she says.

“For some, there’s some evidence of racial discrimination and they don’t have documentation to work properly here and they see the opportunities for jobs as very limited, that there are very many Cambodians looking for jobs and there aren’t that many jobs for other people.”

In Muse's case, the refugee card is mostly "useless", Coghlan says, as it doesn't allow him to open a bank account or even buy a motorbike.

The Nauru letter says refugees would get a similar card and that it would enable them to set up bank accounts and register businesses, as well as being given travel documents.

Coghlan says refugees' prospects in Cambodia have much to do with whether or not they have "some capital behind them, some entrepreneurial skills and the motivation to stay here", but that the desire to leave often outweighs this.

The Australian foreign minister, Julie Bishop, first floated the idea of Cambodia taking in a small number of refugees who sought Australia's protection just six weeks after Cambodian military police opened fire on a crowd of striking garment workers and unionists, killing five.

It was sealed in September, when the then immigration minister, Scott Morrison, signed a memorandum of understanding and clinked glasses of champagne with Cambodia's interior minister, Sar Kheng, in Phnom Penh.

The operational guidelines for the deal, which is worth \$40m in aid to Cambodia from Australia, says the latter would bear the costs of the settlement arrangements. In February it was announced that the International Organisation for Migration would be providing logistical support.

Sources say the IOM and officials from the Australian embassy have been making inquiries about secure, villa-style properties in Phnom Penh over the past two weeks. IOM's regional spokesman, Joe Lowry, referred questions to the embassy, which referred them on to the office of the immigration minister, Peter Dutton. Dutton's office has not responded to questions.

Khem Sarin, who heads the Ministry of Interior's refugee department, says because none of his officials were on Nauru, his department would require a list of genuine volunteers.

Although the pendulum of opinion does swing in Phnom Penh, feelings are strong among some that the deal is sour and should never have been signed.

"The government has never helped me," says 47-year-old Hin Chan, taking a break from picking up plastic rubbish on a dust-choked road in the Stung Meanchey neighbourhood. "The deal is not good. [The refugees] should go back to their own country."

In Boeng Kak, where 3,000 families were evicted between 2009 and 2010 to make way for a multimillion-dollar development project, housewife Ngoun Kimlang says life would be no better in Cambodia for the refugees, and laments that the money exchanging hands between countries will not benefit regular Cambodians.

At a cafe popular with wealthier Cambodians, feelings are mixed. Ly You Chhoun, a 24-year-old who works in a travel firm, says Vietnamese and Chinese nationals already outnumber Cambodians, and the refugees "should be sent to a developed country, because Cambodia is still developing".

He imagines life will be difficult for them, citing attacks on Vietnamese nationals as one area of concern.

A few tables over, businessman Ung Pao Ly sits with three smartphones. He says he has no problems with the deal but sees significant opposition to it and negative commentary on Facebook.

Both men agree that the public education and health systems – which the refugees will have to rely on – are best avoided. The teachers don't care enough, they say, and people have to wait too long to be examined in public hospitals.

Ahmad Yahya, president of the Cambodian Muslim Community Development Organisation, is more hopeful. He tells Guardian Australia he shares a kinship with refugees, having been one himself in the US, "so I know how difficult life can be in refugee camps".

He says he intends to establish a fund to assist them in their transition to Cambodian life.

"If the government opens the door to us [to help the refugees], they could open a restaurant or shop ... if they have that idea, we should help them to start – then I would feel confident that they would have a good life here," he says.

In 2009 Cambodia deported 20 Uighur asylum seekers to China at gunpoint and in late February 36 Montagnard asylum seekers were sent back to Vietnam.

<http://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/apr/20/refugees-sent-from-nauru-to-cambodia-may-join-others-in-lining-up-to-leave>

49. Resettlement offer to asylum seekers may have breached Cambodia deal

Asylum seekers on Nauru have been approached about resettlement in Cambodia, in apparent breach of deal specifying only those with refugee status should be considered

The Guardian

Paul Farrell

Wednesday 22 April 2015 11.02 AEST

Australian immigration officials have approached asylum seekers within the Nauru detention centre about resettlement in Cambodia, apparently in contravention of the agreement between the two countries.

Last week Australian immigration staff distributed letters to refugees on Nauru offering them a settlement package in Cambodia. The International Organisation for Migration confirmed it was sending an official in anticipation of movements.

The settlement agreement with Cambodia specifies that offers should be made only to people with refugee status. But it is understood that a number of asylum seekers whose refugee status has not been determined have also been approached.

One asylum seeker on the island told Guardian Australia his friend who was “living in OPC2 [the detention centre] and hasn't got his verdict came to our camp to say goodbye”.

“He said he wants to go to Cambodia, get the money then find another smuggler to go somewhere else,” they said.

Other sources on the island also say Australian immigration staff have been approaching asylum seekers there about settling in Cambodia.

On Monday the immigration minister, Peter Dutton, told ABC radio Australia had approached “a large number of people on Nauru”. His office has not responded to questions about whether this included asylum seekers.

The memorandum of understanding between Cambodia and Australia says Cambodia will offer permanent settlement to people who have “undergone a refugee status determination process in the republic of Nauru and have been determined to be a refugee, and meet the entry and settlement requirements of the kingdom of Cambodia”.

They must have been found to be refugees, must have made a voluntary decision to go to Cambodia and must have their applications considered by Cambodian officials.

“Cambodia will consider a list of names of refugees, and relevant documents of individual cases, including: personal information, health background, records of interviews and refugee status determination, to determine eligible refugees to be settled,” the MOU said.

The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), which plays a small part in the arrangements under the MOU, says Cambodia will consider the names of refugees and be provided with documents, and will “share a copy of those documents with the office of the [UNHCR] in Cambodia”.

But a spokeswoman for the UNHCR has told Guardian Australia the organisation had not received copies of any documents from refugees who have agreed to the deal.

The Australian and Cambodian governments have put out conflicting statements about the progress of any potential settlements.

The transfer of refugees to Cambodia was scheduled to begin on Monday, but it has been delayed, in part due to the arrival of Cambodian officials.

On Monday, Dutton said there were logistical issues with officials from Cambodia. If that meant a delay of a couple of days, “then so be it”, he said.

A spokesman for Cambodia's interior ministry, Khieu Sophea, told Cambodia Daily a delegation was en route to Nauru on Monday. But he said no transfers were imminent.

“We don't know anyone [who] volunteered so far,” Sopheak said.

The settlement agreement with Cambodia has faced heavy criticism from human rights groups. Unicef has said Australia would be violating the rights of children if transfers went ahead.

<http://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2015/apr/22/australian-officials-on-nauru-may-have-breached-terms-of-cambodia-agreement>

50. Four Nauru refugees who agreed to go to Cambodia wait to fly out

Three of the four refugees who agreed to take up the Australian government's resettlement offer are being housed in the detention centre, but departure date remains uncertain

The Guardian
Paul Farrell
Monday 27 April 2015 09.50 AEST

Three refugees who have agreed to travel to Cambodia are being housed in the Nauru detention centre before they are scheduled to fly out.

There are currently just four refugees who have agreed to take up the Australian government's resettlement offer in Cambodia, despite a large presence of Australian immigration department staff on the island who have been promoting the settlement package.

Those who have agreed to be resettled include a male and female couple and an Iranian man. A Rohingya man has also agreed to be settled in Cambodia, but is not yet being held inside the detention centre.

A document titled "talking points", distributed to Transfield Security staff and seen by Guardian Australia, outlines that the refugees will be located in the "delta block" of the RPC1 compound, and will be "clearly identifiable by a bright green ID card with photo".

The document said that "this select group of refugees have freedom of movement in and out of the RPC" but adds that "visitors will not be permitted" to see the refugees who agreed to go to Cambodia.

The flight to Cambodia still appears to be scheduled imminently, although it is not clear what the precise date of departure will now be. The document describes how a case manager on the island will be the point of contact for the refugees "for a period of up to two weeks while they transition to Cambodia for their safety".

It goes on to say "all staff are reminded of cultural sensitivities, ensuring this Cambodia project runs smoothly is of high priority for both Nauru and the Australian governments".

The federal government is putting considerable resources towards encouraging refugees on Nauru to take up the Cambodia deal. The immigration minister, Peter Dutton, last week appeared in a video message played to asylum seekers and refugees.

In the message, Dutton urged refugees to take up the offer and be on the first flight, and suggested those who were not on the initial flight may not receive the same settlement package, which includes certain health and accommodation costs.

The deal between Australia and Cambodia has faced heavy criticism from human rights groups. The government's own travel advice to Australians who are considering travelling to Cambodia warns of the risks of assaults, armed robberies and of the "very poor quality" of medical and health services.

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

<http://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2015/apr/27/four-nauru-refugees-who-agreed-to-go-to-cambodia-wait-to-fly-out>

51. MEDIA RELEASE: Nauru refugees protest against Cambodia & offshore processing

Saturday April 25, 2015
Refugee Action Coalition
Ian Rintoul
mobile 0417 275 713

Around 200 refugees staged a protest at Ijuw camp on Nauru, late yesterday afternoon, Friday 24 April.

The refugees called for "Justice," and "Freedom," and "Cambodia - never, ever."

The protest comes at the end of a week of frenzied efforts by the Australian immigration department to find refugees and asylum seekers who will agree to go to Cambodia.

"The chartered plane that was meant to take refugees from Nauru to Cambodia seems to have been indefinitely postponed due to lack of interest," said Ian Rintoul, spokesperson for the Refugee Action Coalition.

Despite massive bribes of up to \$15,000 for those who agree to be resettled in Cambodia, the Refugee Action Coalition can only confirm one Iranian asylum seeker and one Rohingya refugee who have so far agreed to go to Cambodia.

The lack of interest is a massive embarrassment for Immigration Minister, Peter Dutton and the Australian government.

For the last few days, refugees on the island have been getting random phone calls from officials trying to sell the deal - so far, to no avail.

Despite the Cambodian agreement supposedly only being available for refugees, the Immigration Department has also approached asylum seekers in the detention centre in an effort to get some interest in being transferred to Cambodia.

"Not only is the government circulating false information about conditions on Cambodia, there is a clear implication that the Australian government is offering refugee status to asylum seekers who have been waiting 18 months for a refugee determination - as long as they will go to Cambodia. It is exploitation of extremely vulnerable people for their own corrupt political ends," said Rintoul.

Meanwhile the conditions in the main refugee family camp have deteriorated to crisis point. The camp, which has three pregnant women and 13 children, has been without power and water for five days, creating unhygienic and unsanitary conditions.

For more information contact Ian Rintoul mob 0417 275 713

52. MEDIA ALERT: Ahwazi Arabs to protest at Immigration Dept Canberra

Sunday April 19, 2015

via Ian Rintoul, Refugee Action Coalition

Ahwaz community representative Ahmad: mobile 0403 117 054

Ian Rintoul mobile 0417 275 713

More than 100 Ahwazi Arabs from across the country will converge on Canberra to protest at the Immigration department and at the Iranian embassy on Monday 20 April.

The Ahwazi are a persecuted minority in south-west of Iran; the most oil-rich region. Ahwazis are denied the right to education in their own language.

April 15 marks the 10th anniversary of the peaceful Ahwazi intifada against forced displacement, discrimination and persecution of the indigenous Arabs by the Iranian regime.

In the 2005 Intifada, the Iranian regime gunned down at least 130 civilians in cold blood. At least 2,000 were incarcerated and more killings were carried out in the following months and years.

At least four Ahwazis were executed in 2014; in January, two Ahwazi Arab teachers, Hadi Rashedi and Hashem Shaabani, and on June 12, Iranian authorities informed the families of Ali Chabishat and Seyed Khaled Mousavi, that they had secretly executed and buried, regardless of appeals by the United Nations.

The Ahwazis will protest against the detention of Ahwazi Arab in Australia and on Manus and Nauru and against the on-going persecution by the Iranian regime.

It is estimated that more than 100 are in detention in Australia and offshore. Around 1000 are on bridging visas in the community waiting to be processed.

On 28 May, last year, Foreign Minister Julie Bishop issued a statement expressing Australia concern at the use of the death penalty, on-going human rights abuses in Iran, including the mistreatment of ethnic and religious minorities:

<http://www.bahai.org.au/NewsMedia/NewsStories/ArticleView/tabid/72/ArticleId/239/Australian-Foreign-Minister-expresses-deep-concerns-for-Baha-is-in-Iran.aspx>.

In her visit to Iran last week - she said nothing about such persecution.

The Ahwazi community will protest in Canberra, Monday 20 April:

(i) In front of Department of Immigration in Canberra on Monday 20th April from 11:00 am to 12:30 pm. Dr John Minns, representing Canberra's Refugee Action Committee, Canberra will speak at the protest;

(ii) protest in front of the Iranian Embassy in Canberra from 1:00 pm to 3:00 pm.

For more information contact Ahwaz community representative Ahmad 0403 117 054; or Ian Rintoul 0417 275 713

53. Teenager charged with sex offences against child in detention appears in court: Immigration Department

ABC Radio CAF - PM

By Felicity Ogilvie

Posted Thu 23 Apr 2015, 6:18pm

A teenage male charged with sex offences against a male child that allegedly took place inside a Darwin detention centre has appeared in court, the Department of Immigration says.

The Northern Territory Police said they had charged a teenage male with sex offences against a minor.

The situation has sparked comments about child protection in detention centres by Peter Young, a psychiatrist who used to work as the director of mental health in detention centres until he resigned last year.

Dr Young said that health staff have been told that rather than reporting allegations of child sex abuse to external child protection agencies, they should make the mandatory reports to the Immigration Department.

"One of the problems faced in immigration detention has been that the department attitude towards these things, when they do come up, is that the normal jurisdiction of the state-based child protection agency doesn't apply," he said.

Another psychiatrist, Louise Newman, has spoken out about the practice.

Professor Newman lost her job as the chairwoman of the Expert Health Advisory Group, which provided independent health advice about asylum seekers, when the Government scrapped the group after winning office in 2013.

"Child protection is not a matter for the Department of Immigration," Professor Newman said.

"The Department of Immigration have no role in that — [they] have actually failed systematically in their duty of care for protection for children in many ways.

"It's rather alarming to think that conditions and the system would in fact report suspected cases of serious child abuse and assault to the Immigration Department, effectively bypassing an existing system."

Reporting to Immigration Department a conflict of interest: Newman

Professor Newman said it was a conflict of interest that had been going on for a decade.

"In the cases that I was personally aware of, they were not referred to external agencies. Some cases have involved compensation claims, which the department then settled out of court," she said.

"So an acknowledgement of the fact that abuse had occurred to people, children who'd been formally detained."

She said some cases involved the sexual abuse of children, some as young as primary school age.

"In the case that I was personally involved [in], that was settled out of court. That was abuse by a fellow detainee, an adult," she said.

Professor Newman said protecting the rights of children in detention was just as important as protecting the rights of other children in Australia.

The Immigration Department is yet to respond to the ABC's questions about child protection notification inside detention centres.

<http://www.abc.net.au/news/2015-04-23/teenager-charged-with-sex-offences-against-child-in-detention/6416920>

54. Asylum children will face 'bleak fate' after deportation to Malaysia, says lawyer

Australian-born asylum children will face 'bleak fate' after deportation from Darwin to Malaysia, human rights lawyer says

ABC News Online

By Avani Dias

First posted Thu 23 Apr 2015, 6:08pm

Updated Thu 23 Apr 2015, 10:40pm

Three Australian-born children could be in danger of becoming stateless when they are deported to Malaysia from a Darwin detention centre, a human rights lawyer says.

The children, aged five, four, and two, were born in Queensland while their Malaysian parents were on a bridging visa.

After the visa expired, the family was moved to Darwin's Wickham Point Detention Centre.

The ABC has seen a notice which says they will be deported to Malaysia next week.

Human rights lawyer David Manne said the children will lose basic rights after they are deported.

"Look these three children face the very real risk of not being recognised as Malaysian citizens, of remaining stateless," he said.

The family is concerned the boy has a skin infection that has not been treated in detention and would not be cared for if the children are not citizens in Malaysia.

"Including not being able to go to school or get an education or even have access to basic medical care that they need ... that would be a terrible fate," he said.

Mr Manne said it will take time and money for the children to be acknowledged as citizens in Malaysia because of the country's lengthy application process.

"Having been born here, these children now face a very uncertain and potentially very bleak fate back in Malaysia," he said.

"The Australian Government has the discretion to allow them to stay, and it should show some heart by letting them stay."

The family's lawyer Carrie Lee said they had applied for Australian citizenship and twice for a protection visa because the children would be stateless.

But Ms Lee said all of the applications were knocked back.

"The major concern is their health, I understand that one of the children is not doing so well," she said.

"If they are unable to get Malaysian citizenship as well, then they will not be qualified for the Malaysian education."

At a press conference on Thursday, Immigration Minister Peter Dutton maintained that asylum seekers in detention would not be settled in Australia under any circumstances.

"We want them to go back to their country of origin," he said.

Mr Dutton said the Government's "tough stance" was resulting in less asylum seekers arriving by boat.

"The turn backs where it's safe to do so, the tough stance we're taking in relation to Nauru, the temporary protection visas, all of these measures have worked in concert to stop the boats."

<http://www.abc.net.au/news/2015-04-23/aust-born-asylum-children-bleak-fate-human-rights-lawyer-says/6416956>

55. Asylum seeker gets good behaviour bond

AAP / news.com.au

April 21, 2015 6:59PM

AN asylum seeker who pleaded guilty to damaging a Darwin detention centre dining hall and assaulting another detainee has escaped with two good behaviour bonds.

NT Magistrates Court heard on Tuesday the man, who cannot be identified, was "clearly on edge" in November last year when he discovered Serco staff had left a personal letter he wrote to authorities on a table in the hall where other detainees read it.

Enraged, the man overturned several tables, threw one at a wall, at a window, and smashed a window with a chair at the Wickham Point centre.

The court heard the man had fled Iran fearing for his life with his wife and infant son in July 2013.

He suffered from depression, anxiety, chronic back pain, and other medical conditions and was having marital troubles, all of which contributed to the incident, the court heard.

"Coming to Australia has clearly not been what you expected it to be," Magistrate Tanya Fong Lim told the man.

She said the frustrations of detainees held indefinitely could be understood, although damaging property was unacceptable.

But in his case, Ms Fong Lim said the negligence of authorities leaving his personal documents for others to read was not acceptable.

"You are entitled to your privacy ... The authorities ought to have been more careful," she said.

The matter was discharged without a conviction, with a 12-month good behaviour bond.

The man also pleaded guilty to assaulting another detainee the day before his outburst in the dining hall in November.

"Everybody in detention is under pressure and is in an unnatural situation," Ms Fong Lim said.

She said a message had to be sent to detainees that peace had to be maintained within detention centres, and so she recorded a conviction for the assault along with a 12-month good behaviour bond.

<http://www.news.com.au/national/breaking-news/asylum-seeker-gets-good-behaviour-bond/story-e6frku9-1227314152973>