

Project SafeCom News and Updates

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1. Stan Grant: I can tell you how Adam Goodes feels. Every Indigenous person has felt it

Estranged in the land of our ancestors, living on the fringes of a rich society – parse your words, but we see only race in the attacks on AFL player Adam Goodes

The Guardian

Stan Grant

Thursday 30 July 2015 14.45 AEST

I have wondered for days if I should say anything about Adam Goodes.

My inclination is to look for common ground, to be diplomatic. Some of the fault is with Adam. Maybe he's been unnecessarily provocative. Racism? Perhaps. Perhaps the crowds just don't like him.

Yes, I could make a case for all of that. But there are enough people making those arguments and all power to them.

Here's what I can do. I can tell you what it is like for us. I can tell you what Adam must be feeling, because I've felt it. Because every Indigenous person I know has felt it.

It may not be what you want to hear. Australians are proud of their tolerance yet can be perplexed when challenged on race, their response often defensive.

I may be overly sensitive. I may see insult where none is intended. Maybe my position of relative success and privilege today should have healed deep scars of racism and the pain of growing up Indigenous in Australia. The same could be said of Adam. And perhaps that is right.

But this is how Australia makes us feel. Estranged in the land of our ancestors, marooned by the tides of history on the fringes of one of the richest and demonstrably most peaceful, secure and cohesive nations on earth.

The "wealth for toil" we praise in our anthem has remained out of our reach. Our position at the bottom of every socio-economic indicator tragically belies the Australian economic miracle.

"Australians all let us rejoice" can ring hollow to us. Ours is more troubled patriotism. Our allegiance to Australia, our pride in this country undercut by the dark realities of our existence.

Seeds of suspicion and mistrust are planted early in the Indigenous child. Stories of suffering, humiliation and racism told at the feet of our parents and grandparents feed an identity that struggles to reconcile a pride in heritage with the forlorn realities of a life of defeat.

From childhood I often cringed against my race. To be Aboriginal was to be ashamed. Ashamed of our poverty. Ashamed of the second-hand clothes with the giveaway smell of mothballs and another boy's name on the shirt collar.

Ashamed of the way my mother and grandmother had to go to the Smith Family or Salvation Army for food vouchers. Ashamed of the onions and mince that made up too many meals.

We were ashamed of the bastardised wreckage of a culture that we clung to. This wasn't the Dreamtime. This was mangy dogs and broken glass.

Like the Goodes family, we moved constantly as my father chased work. But wherever we went we found our place always on the fringes. What semblance of pride we carried too easily laid low by a mocking glance or a schoolyard joke.

We were the blacks. So easily recognised not just by the colour of our skin but by the whiff of desperation and danger we cloaked ourselves in. What resentment we harboured, we too often turned on ourselves, played out in wild scrambling brawls from the playground to the showgrounds that sent the same message: stay away from the blacks.

There was humour and there was love and there was survival. And as I grew older I pieced together the truth that we didn't choose this. We are the detritus of the brutality of the Australian frontier.

As Australia welcomed waves of migrants and built a rich, diverse, tolerant society, we remained a reminder of what was lost, what was taken, what was destroyed to scaffold the building of this nation's prosperity.

Full story at <http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2015/jul/30/i-can-tell-you-how-adam-goodes-feels-every-indigenous-person-has-felt-it>

2. Paul Daley: We feud over Adam Goodes because our big questions remain unanswered

In the absence of a political settlement between black and white Australia, events like Adam Goodes' war dance can easily call forth a history of racism

The Guardian
Paul Daley
Friday 31 July 2015 15.41 AEST

Some argue the catalyst for the racially freighted booing of Adam Goodes was in 2013, when he singled out a 13-year-old Collingwood supporter who called him an ape.

Others nominate the Carlton match in May when Goodes performed his Indigenous war dance that involves a spear-throwing gesture. Or was it Goodes's 2014 address as Australian of the Year, when he strongly identified with the Indigenous melancholy around Australia Day because it marked the moment of British invasion?

I think we should go back even further to 1770, when Captain James Cook and a couple of Gweagal tribesman were involved in this continent's first east coast moment of "contact".

The Gweagal threw spears. Cook's men shot at the Gweagal, wounding at least one and setting the tone for the 1788 invasion and all that followed, to which Goodes referred graciously in his Australia Day speech.

Two hundred and forty five years later the big questions at the heart of Australian nationhood remain unanswered. There's been no reckoning for the extreme violence, dispossession and related trauma that still reverberates in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australia, no treaty and no honest dealings on sovereignty.

There's been a lot of talk about reconciliation over the years (never mind the absence of initial conciliation), lots of national gesturing, a high court judgment overturning the notion of terra nullius (to which too many in public life, apparently, still adhere).

But there has been no political settlement between black and white Australia.

Notwithstanding that the question at the heart of the "Recognise" debate is yet to be formulated, constitutional recognition – of which Goodes is a prominent proponent – will not provide such a settlement.

Which is why I think it helps, in the absence of Goodes speaking publicly at the moment, to consider the words of his former fellow Sydney Swan, Michael O'Loughlin.

O'Loughlin explained why Goodes' teammate Lewis Jetta reprised the war dance last weekend:

"I know why Lewis did it. We won't sit in silence, we will continue to fight for our mob. We will continue to be proud of who we are, what we stand for and what we're fighting for. We live in a great country and we want it to thrive and get better and better."

"In doing that you have to recognise what has happened in the past to indigenous people and what they continue to go through. For us to move forward as a great country those are the things we need to keep fighting for."

So, the spear-throwing gesture is an entirely appropriate metaphor that, as O'Loughlin points out, focuses on the ongoing struggle for the attainment of economic and social equality, while reinforcing the need for broader cultural and political acknowledgement of past injustice.

It has nothing to do with self-identifying victimhood (reactionary assertions that Goodes is somehow responsible for the racism he has inspired are akin to saying victims of certain types of assault have themselves to blame) and everything to do with the proud assertion of a desire for honest conciliation.

Andrew Bolt was apparently serious when he said:

"Why this talk of war and why must there be black versus white? I just think playing with racial division like that is dangerous and stupid. This is not a country that is so racially divided you need to exploit it like that and make a symbol of war your expression of Aboriginality."

Which misses the point entirely.

Full story at <http://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/postcolonial-blog/2015/jul/31/we-feud-over-adam-goodes-because-our-big-questions-remain-unanswered>

3. The Diplomat: Why Southeast Asia's Refugee Crisis Matters

The Diplomat launches a new series on the region's refugee crisis. Here's why it matters.

The Diplomat
By Surin Pitsuwan and Prashanth Parameswaran
July 23, 2015

For summer and fall 2015, The Diplomat presents "Southeast Asia: Refugees in Crisis," a series of exclusive articles from scholars and practitioners tackling Southeast Asia's ongoing refugee crisis. Launched with the help of former ASEAN Secretary-General Surin Pitsuwan and designed with the assistance of students from Harvard University and Oxford University, the series aims to give the readers a sense of the various dimensions of this complex issue.

In our first piece, former ASEAN Secretary-General Surin Pitsuwan and The Diplomat's associate editor Prashanth Parameswaran launch the series with a framing article on the issue.

In May 2015, thousands of Rohingya refugees from the Rakhine State of Myanmar and economic migrants from Bangladesh were found stranded in the Strait of Malacca off the coast of Thailand, Malaysia and Indonesia. This was the start of the latest round of Southeast Asia's refugee crisis. The image of the overcrowded, shabby boats full of people – haunted and hungry, faced with dwindling supplies of food and water – seized the world's attention.

Full story at <http://thediplomat.com/2015/07/southeast-asia-refugees-in-crisis/>

4. The Diplomat: Australia and the Southeast Asia Refugee Crisis

A look at Canberra's role – or lack thereof.

The Diplomat
By Dr. Savitri Taylor
July 31, 2015

The phenomenon of stateless Rohingya, Bangladeshi and others engaging in irregular movement across the Indian Ocean is not new. However, the first quarter of 2015 saw a sharp rise in the numbers so doing. The increase was accompanied by reports that Indonesia, Malaysia and Thailand were "pushing back" or "helping on" these irregular movers from their shores and thousands were left stranded at sea for lack of willing rescuers. On 17 May 2015, when asked what he thought of these events, Australia's Prime Minister, Tony Abbott, responded "I'm in no way critical of regional countries for the efforts that they make to stop the boats".

The Prime Minister could hardly have said anything else without being accused of gross hypocrisy, because his own Liberal-National Coalition government had come into power on a platform which included a pledge to "stop the boats" then arriving in Australia. Upon taking office in September 2013, the Coalition government implemented the military-led Operation Sovereign Borders, which involves, among other things, the turn back of unauthorized maritime arrivals to Indonesia (usually their most recent country of departure) or, in the case, of those arriving directly from their country of origin, hand back to country of origin authorities.

Full story at <http://thediplomat.com/2015/07/australia-and-the-southeast-asia-refugee-crisis/>

5. Operation Sovereign Borders, offshore detention and the 'drownings argument'

Sara Joseph
The Conversation
July 24, 2015 12.01pm AEST

(This article is based on Sarah Joseph's presentation to the Castan Centre for Human Rights Law's 2015 conference, delivered on July 24. You can click through her presentation using Prezi below.)

On the day of the release of the Human Rights Commission's report into children in detention, Prime Minister Tony Abbott said:

"The most compassionate thing you can do is stop the boats. We have stopped the boats.

Upon being confronted in June by allegations of bribing people smugglers, Abbott replied:

"There's really only one thing to say here, and that is that we've stopped the boats. That's good for Australia, it's good for Indonesia and it's particularly good for all those who want to see a better world."

And in response to nearly 2000 drownings in the Mediterranean in one quarter this year, Abbott's advice to Europe was blunt:

"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."

And one can see that this line is taken up by some in the media is well – as seen in this tweet from News Ltd columnist Chris Kenny.

"Left ignores fact asylum seekers owe their lives to fed govt...cheap public transport not quite the deal breaker!"

Under the period of the Rudd/Gillard government, it is widely accepted that around 1200 asylum seekers drowned on their way to Australia. That figure is backed up by Monash's Border Observatory website, Marg Hutton's sievx.com website and ABC Fact Check. It seems around 2-4% of those who attempted the journey died doing it.

Under the Abbott government, Hutton and the Border Observatory record about 40 likely deaths by drowning of people trying to make their way to Australia by boat, most in a single incident in the government's first month.

So, the argument is that the government's suite of harsh measures, including towbacks, offshore detention, offshore processing and resettlement, offshore non-processing and non-resettlement, are designed to deter people from seeking asylum in Australia by boat. They stop people from embarking on dangerous journeys where they might drown.

And now the opposition leader, Bill Shorten, is advocating the same policy, reasoning that the policy "saves lives".

At first glance this seems a powerful moral argument. The drownings argument has swayed many who were once critical of harsh border measures.

The 50 deaths on the rocks at Christmas Island in December 2010 swayed the ALP left, which was long resistant to offshore processing – and also Paris Aristotle, of the Victorian Foundation for the Survivors of Torture, whose commitment to human rights cannot be doubted. Public intellectual Robert Manne also changed his mind, saying that opposition to offshore processing was part of "ineffectual and sometimes misguided humanitarianism".

So, how to evaluate this "drownings" argument?

Full story at <https://theconversation.com/operation-sovereign-borders-offshore-detention-and-the-drownings-argument-45095>

6. Michael Gordon: Shorten gets a lifeline on boat turnback policy

There is much to like about the policy by there are also many unanswered questions.

Sydney Morning Herald
July 27, 2015 - 12:07AM
Michael Gordon

Bill Shorten's victory on the most divisive issue at Labor's national conference was so emphatic that, in the end, all that was deemed necessary to establish it was a show of hands by voting delegates, rather than a count.

Not only was turning back boats intercepted at sea endorsed as a tactic to defeat people smugglers, a second motion committing Labor to close offshore detention centres that failed to deliver "humane and safe conditions" was lost on the strength of voices, without even a show of hands.

The Labor leader can be satisfied that the issue is now settled, as far as the party's policy for the next election is concerned, in no small part because he put his authority on the line. But the broader debate has only just begun.

Labor has committed itself to a new architecture to respond to the greatest global humanitarian crisis since the Second World War, with a policy Shorten describes as reflecting the qualities that define the national identity: fairness, compassion and generosity of spirit.

Shorten's most powerful observation was in response to the most potent argument against turnbacks: that if every country embraced them, the global system of protection for refugees would collapse.

If every country embraced the other aspects of Labor's policy, he remarked, the world would be a better place.

While there is much to like about the policy crafted by opposition spokesman for immigration and border protection Richard Marles after painstaking consultations, there are many unanswered questions – and the most troubling of all was not even posed during Labor's passionate but dignified hour-long debate.

The policy in effect proposes a new system for dealing with asylum seekers, one that would reduce the incentive for people to risk their lives on unsafe boats, largely by building the capacity of transit nations as part of a regional framework to deal with the problem.

A doubling of Australia's refugee intake over a decade, with a portion dedicated to resettling refugees from the region; a \$450 million commitment to help the United Nations Human Rights Council's work in South-East Asia and the Pacific; and the promise to lead the development of a regional "humanitarian framework" are key elements.

But the policy is silent on the question of how Australia would transition to this system from an Abbott government approach based solely on deterring would-be arrivals, where any display of compassion is viewed as weakness and a "green light to people smugglers".

Specifically, there is no mention of what a Labor government's attitude would be to around 2000 people consigned to a life in limbo without hope on Nauru or Papua New Guinea's Manus Island.

The only commitment is to "guarantee" their safety by working "with our international partners to implement independent oversight of every Australian funded facility". But how?

As human rights lawyer Daniel Webb recently observed, more asylum seekers sent to Manus Island have died than been resettled, two years after Labor re-opened the centre. For all the promises about prompt processing and resettlement in PNG, those whose claims have been positively resolved are denied work rights or freedom of movement.

Nauru's discomfort with scrutiny is reflected in the refusal to grant visas to journalists and human rights lawyers, let alone allow them to talk to those in indefinite detention. So how could a Labor government guarantee that the promised "independent children's advocate" would have access to children sent to Nauru? How could it ensure the safety of single women living in the Nauruan community?

There are others questions too, such as whether Labor in power will persist with turnbacks if Indonesia refuses to be part of a regional response while an Australian government reserves the right to deploy them.

More broadly, the weight of Labor's record invites scepticism, including the failure to deliver on a commitment to rapid processing and more transparency in 2008, or to back recommendations about a regional framework from the expert panel set up by Julia Gillard.

But don't expect the Abbott government to ask questions about the humanitarian gaps in the policy endorsed at Labor's national conference. Rather, the government will seize on each and every deviation from its hard line to argue that Labor will re-open the asylum floodgates.

And there are deviations. Labor will not turn back boats to the country the asylum seekers have fled, as the Coalition has done in the case of Sri Lanka and Vietnam. Nor will it, we are promised, pay those employed by people smugglers on intercepted boats to return their human cargo to Indonesia.

Moreover, a pledge to take more refugees from the region will be portrayed by the Coalition as a new "pull factor" drawing asylum seekers to countries like Malaysia, Thailand and Indonesia.

The most telling contribution in Labor's debate came from the party's last immigration minister, Tony Burke, but it wasn't when he spoke so movingly about the 33 asylum seekers "lost" at sea on his watch before the government was defeated.

It was when Burke predicted how the Coalition would attempt to undermine the new policy if Labor was re-elected, recalling the Coalition's opposition to the Malaysian people-swap and the undermining of the re-commissioning of detention centres on Papua New Guinea and Nauru.

"They will bugle a message out there claiming, and giving hope to smugglers: 'If you overwhelm it, it will be ok'." he said.

Vindication of the warning came on cue, with Immigration Minister Peter Dutton telling Sky News that people smugglers would be "looking to the weakness of Mr Shorten", and hoping and praying that he is elected at the next election.

"What Mr Shorten is proposing here is basically a white flag to say that if the Labor Party was re-elected ... there would be hundreds of thousands of people arriving illegally by boat."

This response is why Shorten felt he had no choice but to embrace turnbacks, despite the UNHCR's "profound concerns" that they they contravene the spirit of the refugee convention, put vulnerable people at risk and set a poor example to other countries.

Shorten has had a victory that will improve his prospects of an improbable election victory, but the notion of being a model global citizen when it comes to asylum seekers is as distant as a tiny dot of an island in the Pacific.

---- >>>> Michael Gordon is political editor of The Age.

<http://www.smh.com.au/comment/shorten-gets-a-lifeline-on-boat-turnback-policy-20150726-gikryl.html>

7. Kristina Keneally: How can I get my head and heart around Labor's policy on boat turnbacks?

There can be a middle road between a cruel and inhumane approach to asylum policy and a compassionate, regional response. This is what Labor must find

The Guardian
Kristina Keneally
Tuesday 28 July 2015 12.06 AEST

Instinctively I dislike the option of boat turnbacks. Towing people away from Australia when they are attempting a perilous journey in order to seek asylum smacks of cruelty. Such action dishonours our past commitments to compassionate welcome and violates our international treaty obligations. Also, I don't want the Australian Labor party to ape the Abbott government's secretive and mean policies on asylum seekers and refugees.

Given this, how can I get my head – and heart – around the Labor party's decision at its national conference to refuse to rule out boat turnbacks?

History provides a good starting point. Labor in government mishandled policy on asylum seekers. Some of these mistakes had disastrous consequences: children locked up in detention, people left stuck and hopeless in offshore processing, and desperate people dying horrible deaths at sea uncomfortably close to our shores.

Labor took a first and important step toward regaining its credibility and integrity this past weekend by acknowledging its errors. Opposition leader Bill Shorten baldly stated that Labor had made mistakes when it was last in government. Former immigration minister Tony Burke spoke movingly of his sorrow at the loss of 33 lives at sea in the four months he held the portfolio.

Have they said enough? Probably not. Children Labor put in detention have been abused. Women Labor put in detention have been sexually assaulted. Two men Labor sent to Manus Island have died. Riots, mental illness and suicide attempts are the consequences of Labor's decision to re-open Nauru and Manus Island.

The Abbott government deserves credit for getting most of the children out of detention, but in the main the Coalition has continued to force even harsher and hopeless conditions on people in Australian-run offshore detention centres. Until Labor openly owns up to the grave consequences of their actions in office it will be difficult for the opposition to hold the government to account for their own terrible results.

Nonetheless, Labor at its national conference showed a few rare qualities in politics – namely, humility, and an ability to honestly face the truth that its underestimation of pull factors and its inability to disrupt the people smugglers' trade resulted in hundreds of deaths.

However, Labor must resist the argument that the Abbott government's approach to asylum seekers is humane because people are "no longer" dying at sea. The Coalition cloaks its own cruelty in compassionate language to make itself look and feel better: we've turned back the boats, we're saving people's lives, we're so humane!

To listen to the Coalition you'd think the people towed back to Indonesia or Vietnam, or anywhere else, were being put up in nice hotels and allowed to live in relative comfort while they patiently wait their time in an orderly queue. Hardly. Turn back policy may stop the boats but it doesn't stop the suffering: it simply displaces it. Without a regional resettlement program in partnership with our neighbours, turn backs are just sending people back to face other desperate circumstances, or to make another desperate decision to board a boat going somewhere else.

There is nothing humane about one of the wealthiest countries in the world slashing its refugee intake. There is nothing humane about providing sub-par medical care to people in detention. There is nothing humane about muzzling advocates, doctors, teachers and aid workers with threats of jail if they speak about what they witness in detention centres. And there is nothing humane about our government spending more than five times the amount on offshore processing than the UNHCR spends in all of south-east Asia.

My instinctive dislike for boat turnbacks aside, I recognise the tactic in and of itself is neither humane nor inhumane, but the context is what makes it so. The Abbott government has not turned back vast numbers of boats, but still promotes the tactic as a prominent part of its overall approach to asylum seekers. The government's context includes vilification (illegal arrivals), suspicion (might they be terrorists? might they cause traffic congestion?), secrecy (we don't comment on on-water matters), cruelty and military defence against a perceived threat (Operation Sovereign Borders).

That's why Labor's policy response to its mistakes, as well as to the mistakes made by the Abbott government, must be judged in its totality. Labor did not just commit to using boat turn backs where it is "safe to do so", but it also pledged not return people to source countries and to provide full details of turn backs to the public. Labor promised to double the refugee intake, propelling Australia to the second largest in terms of humanitarian numbers and the largest per capita in the world.

Labor vowed that the UN High Commissioner on Refugees will oversee and sign off on all refugee processing. Labor committed to providing \$450m for the UNHCR in our region. Labor will remove temporary protection visas. Labor will put in place independent oversight of Manus Island and Nauru and create an independent children's monitor with statutory powers to take legal action.

The steps Labor outlined this weekend, if enacted, would mark Australia not as a selfish, xenophobic, petulant nation but as becoming a more mature, responsible and compassionate global citizen. There are significant problems that Labor hasn't yet addressed, including what to do with the people languishing in offshore detention, or whether to keep the secrecy provisions in the Border Force Act.

But Labor has started the policy process openly and honestly and with the proposition that it can stop the boats and – at the same time – deliver a more compassionate and equitable solution for asylum seekers in our region.

For Bill Shorten, it is an enormous political gamble. For the sake of our shared humanity, I hope it pays off.

<http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2015/jul/28/how-can-i-get-my-head-and-heart-around-labors-policy-on-boat-turnbacks>

8. Government plan to fast-track refugees in exchange for potential \$19,000 fee

Sydney Morning Herald
July 31, 2015 - 12:28PM
Nicole Hasham

A refugee's visa application would be fast-tracked if they paid a potential \$19,000 fee and their family in Australia promised to cover health and welfare costs, under proposals the Abbott government is weighing to cut resettlement costs.

Refugee advocates say the measures, based on a pilot established by the former Labor government, would shift the cost burden onto desperate families in Australia and prioritise people with financial means over those in greater need.

The Department of Immigration and Border Protection rejected suggestions migrants could "buy" a visa, and said the program offers the government another way to reunite refugees with their families.

A government discussion paper outlines a proposed Community Support Programme whereby refugees and those in similar situations could apply for a humanitarian visa if family or friends in Australia provided "significant financial support" towards their resettlement.

It would expand a pilot set up in mid-2013, in which a \$19,124 fee is charged to the first refugee and \$2680 for subsequent applicants - or about \$30,000 for a family of five.

By March this year the government had raised more than \$2 million from the charges, which it says contributes to resettlement costs.

Almost 670 people had been granted a visa under the pilot - mostly from Syria, Iraq, Eritrea, Afghanistan and Somalia.

Despite community sponsorship programs targeting "lower priority" refugee or humanitarian cases, visa applications under the pilot were assessed "with high priority" by immigration officials, the paper said.

This fast-tracking does not apply to those deemed to have arrived illegally, such as via unauthorised boats.

In a departure from the pilot, the paper said relatives in Australia could be asked to officially assure the government they would repay some health and Centrelink costs incurred by migrants in the first few years of settlement.

It could involve the payment of a bank deposit. Such guarantees under other types of visas require up to \$10,000 for a 10-year period for one adult, and \$4000 for additional adults.

The 500 visas granted under the pilot each year are subtracted from Australia's overall humanitarian intake, which is currently 13,750 places. It effectively reduces government costs of refugee resettlement without increasing the numbers of people accepted.

The paper did not say how many visas might be granted under the expanded program, but pointed to a similar Canadian scheme established in 1978 which aims to accept 6500 people this year.

Refugee Council of Australia chief executive Paul Power supported the concept of families and communities in Australia helping to resettle refugees and humanitarian entrants.

But the government's proposals were "really about the Australian-based family paying a large sum of money to the Department of Immigration", he said.

"It definitely does advantage refugees who have relatives in Australia with financial means over people who otherwise would have been resettled on the basis of humanitarian need," Mr Power said.

"The government has saved money by getting the families of refugees to pay expenses that previously would have come out of Treasury."

He said the application fees come on top of the cost of airfares, medical checks and payments to community organisations that help facilitate resettlement – potentially bringing the bill to bring a family of five to Australia to \$45,000.

The government says high demand for the pilot shows families are willing to pay the costs, which are often lower than providing long-term support to family members overseas.

But Mr Power said many families "can't really afford it but they are pushed into it by their desperation" because there was no other way to secure protection for their relatives in Australia.

The department refused to release public submissions to the proposal for "privacy" reasons.

St Vincent De Paul has previously expressed concern over the pilot, saying it should be used to increase Australia's overall refugee intake, "instead of being a means of government abrogating responsibility to refugees it has pledged to protect".

A department spokeswoman said community sponsorship was not a "buy-a-visa" scheme.

She said applicants in the pilot must meet humanitarian visa requirements "including being subject to persecution or substantial discrimination amounting to gross violation of human rights in their home country, as well as health, character, and security checks".

<http://www.smh.com.au/federal-politics/political-news/government-plan-to-fasttrack-refugees-in-exchange-for-potential-19000-fee-20150731-gin9g0>

9. Go Back To Where You Came From episode 1 recap: Kim Vuga told 'You don't know anything'

Sydney Morning Herald
July 29, 2015 - 11:14AM
Chloe Booker

Kim Vuga didn't fail to stir up controversy with her hardline views on asylum seekers in the first episode of SBS' Go Back To Where You Came From.

The administrator of Facebook page "Stop the boat people" called asylum seekers whose children drowned making the voyage by boat to Australia "murderers".

"Australia is under threat and I would even go as far as saying Australia is under attack," she said on the show on Tuesday night.

"The Australian people are sick and tired of picking up the tab for the refugees."

The self-described freelance journalist from Townsville sent the show trending first on Twitter with her inflammatory comments.

You don't cause disharmony at the table? But you bagged your host's religion at the table! #GoBackSBS
— Sarah Joseph (@profsarahj) July 28, 2015

"I don't believe that people are stateless because everyone comes from somewhere." Face, meet palm #GoBackSBS
— Shalailah Medhora (@shalailah) July 28, 2015

Vuga clashed with fellow participant Nicole Judge, a detention centre whistleblower, throughout the show, making for compelling viewing.

The most explosive argument came as the show's six participants stood out the front of Darwin Correctional Centre.

Judge, who worked on Manus Island and gave evidence to the parliamentary inquiry into the death of Reza Berati, became angry when Vuga called the 23 year-old Iranian asylum seeker a "troublemaker".

"One of the troublemakers that had died had been standing over people," Vuga said to her.

Judge, from Sydney's northern beaches, became highly emotional as she defended Mr Berati.

"Please don't insult me by insulting a man that I knew," she screamed over Vuga.

"You have no idea who Reza Berati is. I knew him; I played soccer with him, and he died at the hands of an Australian employed guard."

"You don't know anything," she told Vuga.

Earlier in the show the two women and Melbourne teacher Andrew Jackson were sent to stay with Palestinian refugee Ammar Mershed, who came to Australia by boat, his wife Sanaa and their three children.

Vuga smirked as the family prayed, claimed it was "bullshit" they were stateless in Iraq and told them she wasn't a "fan of their religion" as she ate at their dinner table.

Judge apologised to the family. "I feel absolutely mortified," she said

Meanwhile, Mershed was reduced to tears, asking why Australians could not "just say welcome".

"We just want to live a respectful life as a human," he told them.

A highlight of the show was how Jackson softened throughout the episode as he spent time with the family.

He had previously called asylum seekers "country shoppers" and "queue jumpers".

"Before I got on this show, I just looked on it as numbers and figures and money, and we don't want the people here," he said.

"But then you meet the people and they're real. Before this they weren't. I know this sounds wrong."

The show also features a Vietnamese refugee, who despite fleeing to Australia by boat as an eight-year-old, believes today's asylum seekers are not genuine refugees.

He and two sisters with opposing views on the situation stay with a Rohingya refugee who fled to Australia by boat from Myanmar.

The show ended by promising an even more confronting next episode.

<http://www.smh.com.au/entertainment/tv-and-radio/go-back-to-where-you-came-from-episode-1-recap-kim-vuga-told-you-dont-know-anything-20150729-gimj9j.html>

10. Andrew Jackson: Why the right is wrong about 'boat people'

I changed my mind about asylum seekers. Here's why.

SBS News Commentary

By Andrew Jackson

28 Jul 2015 - 3:47 PM

Boat people, illegals, queue jumpers, economic migrants, county shoppers.

All terms used to denigrate refugees and asylum seekers, especially those arriving by boat. Why do we use those terms? Why do we ignore or demonise such human tragedy?

I was somebody who used those terms. I was somebody who said they were country shoppers. That once they fled the immediate risk they should stay in the adjacent country. That they should stay and fight for their freedoms in their own country. I attacked people from the left as impractical, occupying the moral high ground but with no realistic understanding of the issues.

Sound familiar? How many of you have used the same arguments or had the same thoughts?

There must be quite a lot of us because we now have both the government and opposition fighting to show who can be the harshest in their treatment of boat people.

They are only doing that because they think that will get them votes from you and I.

And why do we do it?

Guilt.

We live in the best country in the world. We enjoy an incredible standard of living. Immense freedom.

And all by luck.

This is the lucky country. We like to think we achieve things through hard work; that we have earned them. But really, we were just lucky to be born at the time we were in this country.

So we look at the millions and millions of less fortunate in the world - especially refugees. There are about 60 million displaced people in the world of which over 20 million are official refugees in the world. We cannot help them all. And so we feel guilty.

Then a strange thing happens.

We begin to blame them for their misfortune. We blame them for having the bad luck to be born in a war torn country. We blame them for having the bad luck to live under an oppressive dictatorship. And then we blame them for daring to try and escape this for a better life.

How dare they.

We of the right do this in other areas as well. We blame the unemployed for being unemployed, the homeless for being homeless, and so on.

Our view tends to be, "Well, I made it and am successful so why aren't you? It must be because you are lazy." And so on, and so forth.

Yet how much of our success is through hard work and how much is through chance? Knowing the right person? Or being in the right place at the right time?

Deep down we realise that luck plays a big part in our success. We feel guilty because others have not had the same luck.

And so we blame them. They are lazy. They waste their money. They don't want to work, and so on.

With refugees, this guilt is magnified. Hell, these people didn't even have the luck to be born here.

Then we get to the other reason. Fear of the different. We fear the different. It's okay to fear the different. Humans have been doing it for thousands of years.

But we don't like to admit it. In modern times we feel unable to admit that deep down we just don't like some people because they are different. Different looks, different language, different religions, different customs.

So we make up reasons. They don't assimilate. They don't contribute. They stay on welfare. They don't follow our way of life. All of these may be true to an extent.

But that is the argument used against the different for ever. But Australia is a nation of difference. And you know what? Over time the different blends into the normal. We discover that deep down they are just like us. Which of course makes us feel guilty about how lucky our lives are. And so it all starts over again.

So we think of more reasons not to accept them. They should arrive "the right way". Through the front door. Joining the queue. We justify this by saying that we should help the most needy, the most desperate, those who are left in refugee camps. We say the words but deep down we know that this means we won't have to accept anybody.

Feel free to attack me. Feel free to argue your position to me. But before you do, look deep inside and be honest to yourself about why you allow us to treat boat people so inhumanely.

I have been forced to face that question honestly and it was painful. The truth hurts.

But not as much as we hurt asylum seekers.

---->>>> Andrew appears on Go Back To Where You Came From which airs Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday at 8.30pm on SBS.

<http://www.sbs.com.au/news/article/2015/07/28/comment-why-right-wrong-about-boat-people>

11. MEDIA RELEASE: Yongah Hill locked down after Afghan asylum seeker dies overnight

Saturday August 1, 2015
Refugee Action Coalition
Ian Rintoul
mobile 0417 275 713

Yongah Hill detention centre is in lockdown, and Serco's riot squad has been mobilised following the death of a 27 year-old Afghan asylum seeker at around 9pm Friday night.

While the cause of death is still unclear, the man's body was taken from the detention centre by Western Australian police in the early hours of Saturday morning.

The death has highlighted the neglect and lack of medical care in the detention centre. The man had asked for medical help for the last two days, but typically had only been given panadol. There is not even a nurse on duty after 5pm weekdays.

Other detainees have complained that Serco guards took too long to call an ambulance; "They watched and let him die," one asylum seeker told the Refugee Action Coalition.

It is believed that the man had slashed himself earlier on Friday and should have been on suicide watch, which would mean regular observations by Serco guards.

A disturbance broke out following the death when one of the Serco guards was heard to say, "one less for us to look after".

"This is another death in detention that lies at the feet of the Immigration Minister and the neglect that characterises the detention regime. The man should never have been in detention. There is no excuse for keeping someone in detention for three years. If he had been in the community, he would more likely still be alive," said Ian Rintoul, spokesperson for the Refugee Action Coalition.

For more information contact Ian Rintoul 0417 275 713

12. Young asylum seeker dies at WA's Yongah Hill immigration detention centre

ABC News Online
Nicolas Perpetch and Sarah Hawke
Posted Sat 1 Aug 2015, 10:21am

A young Afghan asylum seeker has died at the Yongah Hill immigration detention centre, north-east of Perth.

The man, who was in his twenties, is believed to have died of a heart attack.

The Department of Immigration and Border Protection confirmed a man had died on Friday night and said WA Police attended and would conduct an investigation.

Refugee advocates claimed the man had self-harmed, but in a statement the department said there was no indication of suicide or suspicious circumstances at this stage.

"The department extends our deepest sympathy to the individual's family and friends," it said.

"Appropriate support is being provided to detainees and staff at the centre."

A detainee inside the centre, 80 kilometres north-east of Perth, who did not want to be named, said the man had been unwell for some time.

"He had a heart attack, he died by heart attack. He'd been sick for two weeks," the detainee claimed.

Another detainee, who also did not want to be named, said detainees from the Middle East reacted angrily to the news of the death.

He told the ABC chairs were thrown and abuse directed towards officers.

"I was woken up at one o'clock in the morning by huge mayhem, people shouting, screaming things flying in the air ... as police officers were in the other compound trying to keep at bay all the angry detainees," he said.

"They just threw chairs and things beyond the fence at the police van and they shouted abuse but that's normal when you go into such amount of shock and grief; you just lose your mind."

The detainee said he had previously spoken to the Afghan man who died, and said the man had told him he had two children in Afghanistan and had spent more than two years in detention.

"I have been here 102 days and I have been talking to him many times. He was even able to speak a little bit of French with me, and he was such a sweet guy; he was just waiting for an answer," the detainee said.

"He said to me, 'I'm waiting, I'm waiting, they don't give me any answers'. He was always friendly, polite saying, 'Please, will you let me know'."

The Refugee Rights Action Network released a statement, claiming the Afghan man had been bashed several weeks ago by "501" detainees who are foreign nationals awaiting deportation after serving prison sentences in Australia.

"RRAN has expressed concern and anger on many occasions at the mixing of these two cohorts at Yongah," it said.

<http://www.abc.net.au/news/2015-08-01/young-asylum-seeker-dies-at-yongah-hill-detention-centre/6665422>

13. Asylum seeker dies in Yongah Hill immigration detention centre in WA

Sydney Morning Herald
August 1, 2015 - 2:52PM
Natalie O'Brien, Neelima Choahan

An Afghan asylum seeker has died at a West Australian immigration detention centre from a suspected heart attack amid claims that he had been denied medical treatment for two weeks.

Refugee advocates say that the Yongah Hill Detention Centre, north-east of Perth, is in lockdown and the riot squad has been mobilised after fellow detainees were told about the death of the Afghan man, believed to be Mohammad Nasim Najafi.

A spokeswoman for the Department of Immigration could not confirm that the centre was in lockdown but said a male detainee had died and that there was no indication of suicide or suspicious circumstances.

"The WA Police attended the centre and will now conduct an investigation as per normal practices in such cases," the spokeswoman said. "The department extends our deepest sympathy to the individual's family and friends. Appropriate support is being provided to detainees and staff at the centre. As the matter is currently under investigation, no further details can be provided."

Fellow detainees said the man was sick and had been complaining about a heart condition for the past two weeks.

"They did not let him see a doctor ... only gave him Panadol," said a detainee. "He said he couldn't breathe ... they let him die. Everyone is sad, very sad," he said. "But they [the authorities] don't care."

Greens Senator Sarah Hanson-Young said the circumstances surrounding the death and the medical care Mr Najafi received warranted a full investigation.

"We are hearing more and more cases of asylum seekers who are not receiving access to even the most basic level of health care," she said. "It is time for a thorough review of the health and welfare services across the detention network."

It is understood that Mr Najafi, who was in his mid-20s, arrived at Christmas Island four years ago by boat after his family was killed by the Taliban. It is understood he had a wife who was living in India.

A detainee who knew him said he had suffered mental health problems after the death of his father. The detainee said the only treatment offered for mental health at the centre was medication that made them "sleep all the time".

Ian Rintoul from the Refugee Action Coalition said the death has highlighted the neglect and lack of medical care in the detention centre.

"There is no excuse for keeping someone in detention for three years," Mr Rintoul said. "If he had been in the community, he would more likely still be alive."

The chairman of the Afghan-Australian Association Khaliq Fazal said most asylum seekers had already survived difficult times to get to Australia.

"You take all those hard risks to come here and then to die like this is heart breaking," Mr Fazal said. "Not only has this young man lost his life, now his family is ruined and God knows what will happen to them."

<http://www.smh.com.au/federal-politics/political-news/asylum-seeker-dies-in-yongah-hill-immigration-detention-centre-in-wa-20150801-gipayi.html>

14. MEDIA RELEASE: Asylum seekers at Yongah Hill start protest

Saturday August 1, 2015
Refugee Action Coalition
Ian Rintoul
mobile 0417 275 713

Angry at the overnight death of a young Afghan man, Yongah Hill asylum seekers have begun a protest in the yard of the detention centre.

"We want the media to come. We are treated like animals," said one asylum seeker.

The asylum seekers are angry at the treatment of the Afghan man, who reportedly sought medical treatment for two days before his death, but was given only panadol.

They are also suspicious as no-one was allowed to see the body, either in his room, or when the body was removed from the detention centre. Afghan representatives were summoned to farewell the body, according to custom, but the body remained covered.

"There must be an immediate investigation," said Ian Rintoul, spokesperson for the Refugee Action Coalition, "The lack of medical staff available in Yongah Hill amounts to medical neglect. We can't wait for the inquest to find out why he was not given medical treatment or whether indifference from the Serco guards played a role in his death."

"The asylum seekers should be released. The dead man was detained for three years. Others in Yongah have been held even longer. There is no excuse for keeping asylum seekers in detention. It is killing them mentally and physically."

For more information contact Ian Rintoul 0417 275 713

15. Asylum seeker dreamed of a better future with his family

Sydney Morning Herald
August 2, 2015 - 6:54PM
Neelima Choahan, Lisa Cox

An Afghan asylum seeker who died on Friday at a West Australian detention centre was dreaming of a better future with his wife and two children, a detainee has said.

The comments come as Immigration Minister Peter Dutton was accused of being missing in action for failing to respond to the tragedy more than 24 hours after it occurred.

Refugee advocates have called for an immediate investigation of the incident and warned on Sunday that further protests by asylum seekers at the Yongah Hill Detention Centre were likely.

Mohammad Nasim Najafi, who was in his mid-20s, is believed to have died from a suspected heart attack.

There are claims he had been denied medical treatment for two weeks.

It is understood that Mr Najafi arrived at Christmas Island four years ago by boat after his family was killed by the Taliban.

"He was a very sweet guy," the detainee said.

"He had two boys and his wife was in India, illegally. He always talked about his family.

"His dream was to have a better future."

Fellow detainees have said they were denied an opportunity to say goodbye before authorities removed Mr Najafi's body from the centre.

"They just took Nasim and go. We didn't even see him," the detainee said.

"We have to say goodbye to the body in the Muslim way.

"[But] they bring the police and they make like a wall, they stand in front of us and we couldn't see anything."

After protests at the centre on Saturday, the Australian Refugee Action Coalition said the number of unanswered questions about Mr Najafi's death warranted an immediate inquiry.

"There needs to be an immediate investigation, instead of waiting for the coroner," spokesman Ian Rintoul said.

"The lack of medical staff available in Yongah Hill amounts to medical neglect."

He added that protests at the centre were due to anger among detainees about the lack of care offered to Mr Najafi.

Fairfax Media put questions to Mr Dutton's office and received a statement from the Immigration Department in response.

"There is no indication of suicide or suspicious circumstances at this stage. The WA Police attended the centre and will now conduct an investigation as per normal practices in such cases," a spokeswoman said.

"Detainees have access to appropriate health care and medical treatment at a standard at least comparable to the health care available to the Australian community generally."

Greens immigration spokeswoman Sarah Hanson-Young said Mr Dutton, as minister, "is ultimately responsible for the care and welfare of the people his government keep in detention".

"And yet today he is missing in action," Senator Hanson-Young said.

"It is his job to ensure there is a proper investigation into the circumstances surrounding this man's death.

"The silence from the minister and the lack of sympathies expressed, again show how unfit Peter Dutton is to be the man responsible for the lives of so many vulnerable people."

Mr Dutton later responded and said Senator Hanson-Young was trying to "exploit the death of this young man for her own political reasons and it is disgusting."

"She seeks a headline through confected outrage and trades in the difficulty of others."

He said police were investigating the death and a statement would be issued once more detail was known.

The detainee, who knew Mr Najafi, said they had protested for five hours on Saturday, standing in the centre's yard.

He said more than 100 men were expected to hold another protest on Monday when immigration authorities were expected to visit the centre.

But, he said, everyone was too scared to do anything as it might harm their refugee applications.

"If the Serco [security guards] see you ... they make a report and send it to Immigration Department," the detainee said.

"The mood is black.

"Everyone is silent ... maybe if they had looked after the guy, he wouldn't have died."

The detainee said their lives were in limbo while they waited for the application process to be completed.

"We are suffering every day here," he said.

"I want one of them [the government] to come and live here for day.

"We are dying here, we are missing the future."

<http://www.smh.com.au/federal-politics/political-news/asylum-seeker-dreamed-of-a-better-future-with-his-family-20150802-giplm5.html>

16. Department faces biggest APS executive exodus in three decades

Canberra Times
July 23, 2015
Noel Towell

The Immigration Department now faces the public service's greatest executive brain drain since the 1980s with a quarter of its upper ranks either shown the door or turning their back on the department since its takeover by Customs.

The Canberra Times has confirmed the toll of departures, either already announced or coming up, has reached 30, from a senior executive cohort of 119 in June 2014.

Four deputy secretaries, nine first assistant secretaries and 17 assistant secretaries have now confirmed their departures or are expected soon to do so.

An unprecedented 10 of them have opted to follow their old boss Martin Bowles to the Health Department.

Insiders have complained about the management style of the new regime and there has been unhappiness from veteran public servants forced to wear the military-style Australian Border Force uniform to work each day after a lifetime of civilian service.

Many of the replacement executives drafted in have come from Defence, where new Immigration secretary Michael Pezzullo used to work.

The "militarisation" of the portfolio, which began as a nation-building outfit 70 years ago, has proven too much for many executives, who have voted with their feet.

Long-time public service observers say it is the biggest exodus of senior personnel from an operation since the Hawke government's consolidation of Canberra departments in 1987.

Departmental secretary Mike Pezzullo came to the job with a plan to shed up to 25 senior executives after they were all subjected to a "suitability" screening process.

But the effort to clear out "unsuitable executives" has faltered in the face of so many voluntary departures.

In May, when the number of departures for other departments stood at 15 and there had been three retirements, Mr Pezzullo told a Senate estimates committee that some of his departing executives did not want to work in the department any more.

"Some people might have decided, for their own reasons – perhaps their own personal values – that they might not feel comfortable working at an agency that, for instance, has a border force component that will be armed," he told the cross-party committee.

Mr Pezzullo said a number of his veteran senior bureaucrats had told him during "very sensitive" discussions that the Immigration Department they had joined was different to the one that was emerging under the reform now under way and that it was time for them to go.

"That has been perfectly respected and supported," he said.

Deputy secretaries:

- Liz Cosson – gone to Health
- Mark Cormack – gone to Health
- Wendy Southern – gone to Health
- Peter Vardos – moved to a "special project" and understood to be leaving.

First assistant secretaries:

- John Cahill – will not return from extended leave
- Ken Douglas – will not return from extended leave
- Gary Fleming – not expected to return from secondment to Prime Minister and Cabinet
- Matt Cahill – gone to PM&C
- Alison Larkins – gone to PM&C
- Kate Pope – gone to Health
- Vicki Parker – gone to Social Services
- Matt Yannopoulos – gone to Health
- Christopher Callanan – retired

Assistant secretaries:

- Katie Constaninou – gone to Health
- Bobbi Campbell – gone to Health
- Jackie Davis – gone to Health
- Luke Mansfield – gone to PM&C
- Ross Hawkins – gone to Health
- Paul McCormack – gone to Health
- Daniel McCabe – gone to Therapeutic Goods Administration
- Hawari Badri – Gone to Social Services
- Jill Simpson – gone to Veterans' Affairs
- David Walsh – retired
- Paula Williams – retired

- Amanda Paxton – gone to Migration Review Tribunal
- Rocio Trapaga Saul – accepted redundancy
- Peter Speldewinde – will not return from leave
- Margaret Hoffmann – will not return from leave
- Janet Mackin – retired
- Paul Windsor – gone to Migration Review Tribunal

<http://www.canberratimes.com.au/national/public-service/department-faces-biggest-aps-executive-exodus-in-three-decades-20150723-gidnhv.html>

17. Manus Island: rejected asylum seekers to be deported by Papua New Guinea

Documents issued by PNG also warn those who cannot be returned to their home country will be held in detention indefinitely

The Guardian
 Calla Wahlquist
 Sunday 2 August 2015 14.25 AEST

Asylum seekers who have been denied refugee status on Manus Island have been told they will be deported “as soon as practicable” in new documents issued by Papua New Guinea’s Immigration and Citizenship Service Authority.

The documents, seen by Guardian Australia, also warn stateless asylum seekers, or those who cannot be returned to their home country, will be held in detention indefinitely, until they manage to secure a visa to another country.

The process will apply to so-called “double negatives” – asylum seekers whose application for refugee status has been denied and who have lost their appeal.

The ABC reports there are 50 people with “double negative” status in detention in PNG.

It is understood as many as 400 people currently held on Manus Island have had their first application for refugee status denied.

Guardian Australia understands the documents were read to an assembly of asylum seekers at the Australian-run detention centre, before being pinned to a noticeboard.

It is not yet known if they have been issued to any individuals, which would trigger the deportation process.

Once issued, the document says, the detainee will have one or two days to prepare for a departure interview, where they can state reasons why they should not be returned to their home country. They then have five days to get further information.

“If you choose to depart voluntarily, you will be eligible for Assisted Voluntary Return and reintegration assistance from the Internal Organisation for Migration,” the document says. “If you are involuntarily removed, you will receive no financial assistance.”

Asylum seekers are allowed to have an interpreter at the interview and “communicate with the lawyer of your choice”, provided they can afford to pay. The document states: “If the lawyer charges a fee, this must be paid by you.”

People who are issued the removal notice are to remain in detention in the mean time, but are warned they “may be held in any location, including correctional institutions, while your removal is being effected”.

In a section headed “Do I have any other options?” the document states “No”.

“You do not have the option of remaining in Papua New Guinea,” it says. “You do not have the option of going to Australia. You will never go to Australia.”

Asylum seekers held on Manus Island who are successful in applying for refugee status are supposed to be resettled in PNG, under the Rudd government’s Regional Resettlement Agreement of July 2013.

According to a statement by the PNG prime minister, Peter O’Neill, just 129 detainees had been granted refugee status as of May this year. Another 400 had their refugee application rejected and had been deported. To date, no one has been resettled in PNG.

Ian Rintoul, from the Refugee Action Coalition, said the advocacy group would seek injunctions against the removal of any asylum seekers from PNG until a constitutional challenge to Manus Island detention centre is heard by the supreme court.

The challenge argues asylum seekers have been systematically denied due process and the protection of their rights under PNG law, and demands enforcement of their rights under the constitution. Rintoul said the injunction would be sought when the case is back before the court on 17 August.

Tensions between Australia and PNG are already running high. On Thursday, police in Manus Island threatened to storm the detention centre and arrest senior management for allegedly helping three Australian men, all former guards at the centre, who are charged with raping a local woman.

And on Friday, Peter O'Neill, the prime minister of PNG, said he would remove all Australian officials working in his government by the end of the year, telling parliament he was concerned about spying and also that they were making local government workers lazy.

The immigration minister, Peter Dutton, has been contacted for comment.

<http://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2015/aug/02/manus-island-rejected-asylum-seekers-to-be-deported-by-papua-new-guinea>

18. Rejected asylum seekers told they will be deported; stateless face possible transfer to 'correctional institutions'

ABC News Online

By PNG correspondent Liam Cochrane

First posted Sat 1 Aug 2015, 11:00am

Updated Sat 1 Aug 2015, 11:05am

Asylum seekers who have had their claims and appeals rejected on Manus Island have been told to prepare for deportation.

Anyone found to be stateless will remain at the Australian-funded detention centre or be transferred to "any location, including correctional institutions".

In documents obtained by the ABC, PNG Immigration told the so-called "double negatives" they have no option of remaining in Papua New Guinea and will never go to Australia.

The document said "Immigration and Citizenship Services (ICSA) has scheduled an interview with you to plan for your departure from PNG ... you must depart from PNG as soon as practicable".

An asylum seeker inside the centre said the notice applies to about 50 people with "double negative" status, with a further 120 men waiting for the result of their appeal.

They have been being offered money if they return voluntarily with the International Organisation for Migration.

"If you are involuntarily removed you will receive no financial assistance," the document said.

Asylum seekers were informed of the imminent deportations earlier this week but it is not clear if actions have yet been taken.

The rejected asylum seekers were told a final interview "in the next 1-2 days" will give them one last chance for fresh information about their case and will consider any reason their return would breach PNG's international legal obligations.

"If ICSA assesses that you cannot be removed to your country of origin, you will remain in custody until you are able to obtain a visa to lawfully enter and reside in PNG or another country," it said.

"You will continue to be accommodated at the Regional Processing Centre. However you may be held in any location, including correctional institutions, while your removal is being effected."

Unclear how asylum seekers will get legal representation

Asylum seekers have been told they have the right to have a PNG-certified lawyer present at the interviews, but it is not clear how the men would arrange such representation.

"If the lawyer charges a fee, this must be paid by you," the PNG Immigration documents said.

The developments inside the detention centre have taken place at a time of controversy outside the Australian-run facility.

On Wednesday the Manus Island police commander threatened to arrest management for their role in helping three expatriate security guards leave the island following an alleged rape incident in mid-July.

The following day two charter planes evacuated some staff from the Regional Processing Centre.

Asylum seekers say they are afraid of expatriate guards and also fear possible reprisals from the family of the young woman involved.

In recent days, 10 to 20 unarmed PNG Navy personnel have been brought in to bolster each security shift at the facility, which is located on an isolated navy base on the remote island.

The Rudd government reopened the detention centre in July 2013 but to date no refugees have been resettled in Papua New Guinea.

<http://www.abc.net.au/news/2015-08-01/png-says-rejected-manus-is-asylum-seekers-to-be-deported/6665474>

19. PNG police investigate alleged Manus rape by expats

A Papua New Guinea MP says police are investigating the alleged rape of a Manus island woman at the Australian-run detention centre by three expatriate workers.

SBS News

By Stefan Armbruster

27 Jul 2015 - 5:08 PM

Ron Knight, the local MP and vice minister for trade, commerce and industry, said the detention centre operator Transfield Services has reportedly removed the three workers from the province.

“Police are investigating. Police are demanding and I’m personally demanding they be flown back immediately and, if they haven’t done it, then their names will definitely cleared,” said Mr Knight.

“They should also be advised that under PNG law pack-rape attracts the death penalty.

“Unfortunately, from my high-level contacts in the police, we believe the operators have already removed those three suspects from the scene and flown them out of the province, which is totally disgusting.”

A Department of Immigration and Border Protection spokesperson said it has “not been notified of any allegation of a sexual assault”.

Transfield Services and sub-contractor Wilson Security have been contacted by SBS for comment.

Mr Knight says if the workers have been removed then it would be interfering with the police investigation.

“I believe those people who have done that should be charged also for breaching our laws in Papua New Guinea,” he said.

“Whoever issued the movement orders and the management should be held responsible.”

The Manus MP said he had spoken to the family of the woman involved.

“She is very shaken and very upset and she will be preparing a statement,” he said.

In an unrelated incident on the weekend, an off-duty local worker at the detention centre was allegedly murdered and another has reportedly had a hand severed.

“Allegations of this nature are a matter for the Papua New Guinea Police Force,” the Department of Immigration and Border Protection said in a statement.

“However the department is aware of the death of a locally engaged subcontractor in the Manus community over the weekend and understands the PNG Police are investigating the circumstances.”

“The department ... has no information about an regional processing centre worker’s hand being severed.”

The incidents are not thought to be due to their work at the detention centre.

Mr Knight warns the detention centre is pushing the Manus community to breaking point.

“The camel has had its last straw put on its back, and when it’s broken, it will be embarrassing for both (the Australian and PNG) governments. At the moment people are getting really tired of what’s happening,” he said.

<http://www.sbs.com.au/news/article/2015/07/27/png-police-investigate-alleged-manus-rape-expats>

20. Manus Island detention centre guard 'found beaten and drowned'

Papua New Guinean employee of Wilson Security allegedly murdered on Friday night, while another guard reportedly had his hand cut off in a machete attack on Saturday

The Guardian
Helen Davidson and agencies
Monday 27 July 2015 14.29 AEST

A Papua New Guinean security guard who worked at the Manus Island detention centre was allegedly murdered over the weekend and another had his hand chopped off in a machete attack, police say.

The deceased man was beaten and drowned and his body discovered about 11pm on Friday night, Manus Island MP Ron Knight said.

Manus Island provincial police commander Alex N'Drasal said the victim was a 25-year-old employee of Wilson Security.

He said police had arrested two suspects and were searching for three more. Those involved were under the influence of a local home brew drink, he said.

"[The victim] was thrown into a river," N'Drasal said.

N'Drasal said in a separate incident early on Saturday morning, another detention centre worker, who had his uniform on at the time, had his hand cut off in a machete attack.

N'Drasal said he did not know who the man's employer was. The man was receiving treatment in hospital. "His hand is in the morgue," N'Drasal said.

Knight told Guardian Australia he did not think the incidents were connected to each other or to their employment at the detention centre. He said the guard was killed in Lorengau town, approximately 30km from his place of work at the Australian-run detention centre.

Knight blamed the violence on an increase in illicit homemade alcohol on the island since a government ban on liquor about a year ago.

"Early this morning they brought another guy from the north coast of Manus who'd been axed to death. Also on the same night the murder happened there were some arson attacks between Lorengau and the regional processing centre," Knight said.

"Our law and order rate went up 130% or something in two days."

"It's very very unusual for our small province ... I think you'll find most of it is associated with this illegal homebrew they are drinking."

A Department of Immigration and Border Protection spokesperson says the matter is for the Papua New Guinea police force.

"However, the department is aware of the death of a locally engaged subcontractor in the Manus community over the weekend and understands the PNG police are investigating the circumstances."

"The department has not been notified of any allegation of a sexual assault and has no information about a regional processing centre worker's hand being severed."

Greens senator Sarah Hanson-Young called for a full explanation from the federal government.

"If there is any truth to these allegations, the government must explain what they are doing to make staff and refugees safe," said Hanson-Young in a statement.

"The Australian government must front up and tell the public what is going on. The private contractors, Wilson Security and Transfield Services, also need to be clear about what they know."

Comment has been sought from Transfield and Wilson Security.

<http://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2015/jul/27/manus-island-detention-centre-guard-found-beaten-and-drowned>

21. Australia's influence at Manus Island in question by PNG police

ABC Radio CAF - PM
Liam Cochrane
Monday, July 27, 2015 17:10:23

MARK COLVIN: There are fresh questions about the extent of Australia's influence at the Manus Island detention centre after several staff were sent home before police could investigate possible drug use.

PNG (Papua New Guinea) police say three Australian men and a Papua New Guinean woman were found naked, drunk and sniffing an unidentified substance.

PNG police wanted to investigate but the men were promptly sent home.

The police commissioner says the move disrespects PNG's sovereignty.

Papua New Guinea correspondent Liam Cochrane joins me from Port Moresby.

What do you know about this incident?

LIAM COCHRANE: Well police on Manus Island have told the ABC that the incident took place in mid July. It involved three Australian men, one Papua Guinean woman who, as you said, were found naked in a room at the Australian funded accommodation which is located right next to the detention centre.

Police said that the four individuals were drunk, were sniffing an unidentified substance but in the words of the police commander on Manus "made them very excited and made them take their clothes off".

Now other media has reported that there are allegations of rape surrounding this incident but I should note that the Manus police commander that we spoke to today said there's not a suggestion of sexual assault at this stage. So, following the incident that happened about 10 days ago, the Australian Department of Immigration and Border Protection reported it to the PNG police who started to get ready to investigate what was going on over there.

However, the three men who were allegedly involved were sent home and there was no investigation that was possible.

MARK COLVIN: So, it's clear then that it was the Immigration Department not a private service provider that made this decision to send them home?

LIAM COCHRANE: It's not clear at this stage who made the decision. The Department of Immigration and Border Protection is the, you know, I guess the one that has the ultimate power you could argue. The operator is Transfield and the security company is Wilson Security. It's not clear if the three Australian men were security guards, if they had other roles within the centre - none of that has been clarified and certainly not by the Australian Government.

MARK COLVIN: So what's been the reaction of the PNG police to not being able to pursue what they would see as a legitimate investigation?

LIAM COCHRANE: The police both on Manus Island and back here at the headquarters at Port Moresby are really angry about this incident. The Manus police chief said that he blasted the Australian officials involved and demanded they bring back the three guys that they'd sent home. The police commissioner of the Royal Papua New Guinean Constabulary - that's the RPNGC - is Gari Baki and this is his opinion about the actions of an Australian company operating on PNG soil.

GARI BAKI: It's been treated internally and that's why these people have been deported, sorry, deported. And it gives one very clear indication that we literally have not much say, anything to do with what goes on within the camp. And I think we need to change that. I think it's important to realise that any crime that is committed in Papua New Guinea is a responsibility of the RPNGC to investigate. We should investigate and based on our investigations we advise what would be the next course of action to be taken. That aspect of it has to be respected. We are a sovereign nation, we have a police force that is competent to do the investigations and it must be given that responsibility.

MARK COLVIN: And Liam Cochrane there is no question is there about sovereignty here, it's not as if this happened on Australian diplomatic land, High Commission land, whatever? It is clearly Manus Island; the whole area is clearly PNG soil in legal terms?

LIAM COCHRANE: That's right. In legal terms this is PNG soil. The immigration detention centre is located on a PNG naval base on Manus Island. However, it has been argued in the past that the extent of Australia's involvement and the control, the money that they pour into the place, gives them effective control of what goes on inside the detention centre and surrounds.

MARK COLVIN: And, are you getting any responses from the Immigration Department, from Transfield, from anybody else?

LIAM COCHRANE: Transfield and Wilson Security have not responded to request for the comment. The Department of Immigration in Australia has said that it's unaware of this particular incident, although has commented on other violent cases in the past - in recent past - in Manus Island. So they're really not saying anything on this particular case and the men being sent home. The Australian Greens party is outraged by it so it's expressing concern over these allegations of violence and reports of murder and machete attacks and alleged rape. It paints a picture of Manus in meltdown and said the Government is playing 'secret squirrel' over these allegations and that that's not acceptable in the view of the Greens.

MARK COLVIN: Alright thank you very much Liam Cochrane.

Liam is our PNG correspondent.

<http://www.abc.net.au/pm/content/2015/s4281644.htm>

22. Australian Manus guards found naked with woman sent home amid drugs investigation

Sydney Morning Herald
July 27, 2015 - 11:00PM
Kate Aubusson

Three Australian guards on Manus Island found naked with a woman who claims she was drugged and raped were sent home before local authorities could investigate, the ABC reports.

PNG police said the men and the local woman were found in a state of undress, drunk and sniffing an unidentified substance in mid-July.

But Australia's Department of Immigration and Border Protection has angered PNG police by allowing the detention centre guards to return to Australia before an investigation could be carried out.

"Three foreign officials with a lady were said to be having beers and sniffing some hard stuff when they got all excited, removed all their clothes and exposed their bodies," said Manus Island Provincial Police Commissioner Alex N'Drasal.

Commissioner N'Drasal said he had wanted to investigate the incident but the men were sent home soon after the incident allegedly took place.

"I was mad. I blasted the DIBP guys to bring back these guys and be charged in Manus," Commissioner N'Drasal said.

The woman, believed to be a contractor at the immigration detention centre, claims she was drugged and raped, said local MP Ronny Knight who has spoken to her family, according to the ABC.

Commissioner N'Drasal said he had not been told of any reports of rape and was awaiting further information from the DIBP.

PNG's highest ranking policeman Gari Baki said the incident was indicative of the lack of oversight local authorities had over the detention centre, and called on Australia to respect his country's sovereignty

"It gives one very clear indications that we have literally not much say what goes on within the [detention] camp and I think we need to change that," he told the ABC.

"We are a sovereign nation. We have a police force that is competent to do the investigations and it must be given that responsibility," he said.

A spokeswoman said the DIBP had no knowledge of the incident.

"However the Department is aware of the death of a locally engaged subcontractor in the Manus community over the weekend and understands the PNG Police are investigating the circumstances," the spokeswoman said.

<http://www.smh.com.au/federal-politics/political-news/australian-manus-guards-found-naked-with-woman-sent-home-amid-drugs-investigation-20150727-gilq68.html>

23. Manus Island violence same as a Sydney Friday night, says PNG

Sydney Morning Herald
July 28, 2015 - 3:55PM
Nicole Hasham

Alleged incidents of murder, gang rape and a man's hand being severed by a machete on Manus Island are akin to violence in Sydney on a Friday night, the Papua New Guinea government says, as the nation prepares to resettle refugees turned away from Australia.

The PNG government has been forced to defend the nation's public safety record after reports that a local detention centre worker was allegedly murdered on the island at the weekend and another had his hand cut off in a machete attack. Neither incident is alleged to have occurred at the centre.

There have also been reports that three Australian detention centre guards on Manus Island were this month found naked with a woman who claimed she was drugged and raped.

A spokesman for the government said the incidents were "like in Sydney when people go home from work and get into an altercation".

"Sydney is a dangerous place on a Friday night. Violence is something that's terrible in every society," he said.

"There's a stereotypical view of Papua New Guinea ... being violent but it's improved considerably and it's not the same as things were many years ago."

Asylum seekers who arrive by boat in Australia without a visa are denied refugee status in Australia but will be resettled in PNG, via assessment at Manus Island, under a policy instigated by the former Labor government two years ago.

No refugees have yet been resettled. The PNG government says it is developing a policy on the measure.

The Australian government's travel advice for PNG urges people to "exercise a high degree of caution" and there are concerns that high crime rates in parts of the country mean refugees will not be safe.

In May last year, asylum seekers on an excursion from the detention centre were threatened by locals brandishing machetes, according to refugee advocates. The Australian government dismissed the incident as a "low-level non-physical exchange".

Human Rights Law Centre director of legal advocacy Daniel Webb said the male asylum seekers on Manus Island were already traumatised from persecution in their countries and violence endured in detention.

He said the recent alarming events "surely compound their fears" and the men "need safe, viable resettlement alternatives urgently".

The government spokesman said there were "a lot of steps to go through" before refugees could be resettled, including education and awareness programs.

He said negative Australian media coverage of asylum seekers was often broadcast or published in PNG and the public had come to see them as "pretty scary".

"We have to turn around negative perceptions from that negative media," the spokesman said.

"We have an advertising campaign under way so people understand exactly who refugees are, what their background is, why they are here and their contribution to the community."

A spokeswoman for the Department of Immigration and Border Protection said the incident involving three detention centre staff did not involve criminal allegations, but it would "co-operate fully with any investigation by PNG authorities".

She said the death of a worker did not occur at the detention centre "and is not related to the activities of the centre".

Greens senator Sarah Hanson-Young said the weekend attacks showed detention centre staff and refugees "are vulnerable to an extreme amount of violence. This is incredibly dangerous and concerning.

"These types of violent attacks are showing Manus in meltdown. Keeping people in these conditions is unacceptable, and now we are seeing evidence that the lives of refugees and staff are at risk."

<http://www.smh.com.au/federal-politics/political-news/asylum-seekers-manus-island-violence-same-as-a-sydney-friday-night-says-png-20150728-gim0tj.html>

24. Manus police chief demands Australians return to face gang-rape charges

Three Wilson Security staff fired and sent back to Australia before investigation into accusations of drugging and sexually assaulting Papua New Guinea woman

The Guardian
Helen Davidson
Wednesday 29 July 2015 17.04 AEST

The police commander of Manus Island has demanded the return of three Australian detention centre employees accused of sexually assaulting a Papua New Guinean woman by Thursday afternoon or he will seek to arrest and charge managers for flying them out of the country.

The Australian Department of Immigration and Border Protection has confirmed three Australians were fired and flown back to Australia two weeks ago, but said there was no allegation of criminal conduct in the incident. It also denied the repatriation was part of any cover-up.

The three Australians, all employees of Wilson Security, have been accused of drugging and sexually assaulting a Papua New Guinea woman who also worked at the Australian-run detention centre, on 16 July. It is alleged the men were then flown out of the country back to Australia.

Manus Island police commander Alex N'Drasal told Guardian Australia the three men must be returned to PNG by the end of Thursday or he would seek to arrest and charge any managers and senior employees of the processing centre who facilitated the men's repatriation.

"I was displeased because they are supposed to be here to be investigated and clear their names," said N'Drasal.

"If they are not returned, I will go ahead and arrest all those responsible for deporting them out of Papua New Guinea."

The Department of Immigration and Border Protection told the ABC it had been aware for two weeks of an incident involving the three men, and that the men had been stood down and returned to Australia, but that there was no allegation of criminal conduct.

It also said the repatriation was conducted with the full knowledge and concurrence of PNG police.

"The implication that the Wilson staff were removed to avoid prosecution, or removed without consultation with relevant Papua New Guinea authorities, is simply wrong," it said.

N'Drasal disputed the assertion, and said while he was not releasing the police report at this stage, the accusation was of rape. He also said he was made aware of the allegation only last Friday, and first spoke with PNG and Australian immigration officials on Tuesday.

"They gave me the file of the internal investigation and told me [the men] had already been deported back to Australia," he said.

"Within the period of two weeks, they haven't done anything about it. They did not let police know about it. They did not report the incident to the police for a formal report. They have done nothing all."

Manus Island MP Ron Knight told Guardian Australia he was "disgusted" by the incident.

"I think it's totally disgusting that ... whoever was responsible has allowed these people try and circumvent the PNG law," he said.

"Under PNG law pack rapes can attract the death penalty. We are demanding the three [suspects] be sent back to Manus to face PNG law after investigation. If they have nothing to worry about they have nothing to worry about."

Knight said those responsible for flying the three men out of the country "should also face the law for interfering with an investigation".

"Whatever can be thrown at them should be thrown at them. They should face the full extent of the law as well."

The Department of Immigration and Border Protection has been contacted for comment. A spokeswoman for Wilson Security said the company had been instructed not to comment and to direct all inquiries to it.

<http://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2015/jul/29/manus-island-police-chief-demands-three-security-men-return-to-face-gang-rape-charges>

25. PNG police confirm Manus Island attempted rape allegations, demand return of accused Australians

ABC News Online

PNG correspondent Liam Cochrane and Wesley Manuai

First posted Wed 29 Jul 2015, 11:48am

Updated Wed 29 Jul 2015, 1:28pm

Police in Papua New Guinea have threatened to arrest all managers at the Manus Island detention centre if three Australian men accused of attempted rape are not flown back to PNG.

The three men and a Papua New Guinean woman were reportedly found naked, intoxicated and sniffing an unidentified substance in mid-July.

Provincial police commander Alex N'Drasal said the woman involved was interviewed this morning and alleged the men tried to rape her.

The woman reportedly told police she was given pills and sexually assaulted.

Police say they are investigating reports of "attempted rape, indecent exposure and sexual assault".

Commander N'Drasal has demanded Australia's Department of Immigration and Border Protection (DIBP) arrange the return of the three expatriates by close of business Thursday.

"If they are not here, we will proceed on to arrest all those managers who facilitated the deportation of those three Australians, because their actions prevented the course of justice," he told the ABC.

The woman involved is understood to also work at the Australian-funded detention centre and PNG police said she could identify the men sent home.

The Immigration Department said in a statement that it had known about the incident for two weeks and said the men in question were employees of the centre's security provider Wilson Security.

"The Department of Immigration and Border Protection categorically rejects assertions made over recent days that it was involved in a 'cover up' of an alleged sexual assault on Manus Island," the statement said.

"To clarify the matter, the Department was made aware immediately in mid-July of an incident involving three service provider staff and a locally engaged staff member. There were no allegations of a criminal nature made as a result of this incident. However, the alleged incident was inconsistent with expected behaviours and contrary to the service provider's code of conduct.

"The three service provider staff were stood down and returned to Australia as part of standard procedures with the full knowledge and concurrence of the PNG police."

But PNG police insist they did not agree to send the men home and remain furious at the actions of Australian officials.

"They [DIBP] are concealing a lot of information from us and that's a total lie," Commander N'Drasal said.

PNG's prime minister Peter O'Neill has called for an investigation into the matter.

"After I receive the report from our officials, I will take this matter up with the Australian Government and we will come to the bottom of this," Mr O'Neill told local television station EMTV.

"I agree with the Commissioner, he is in charge of this, he must investigate who sent this particular person out of the country without him facing the law."

Yesterday, former prime minister and one of the founding leaders of independent PNG, Sir Michael Somare, said PNG should not have agreed to host the Australian-run immigration detention centre on Manus Island.

<http://www.abc.net.au/news/2015-07-29/police-confirm-manus-island-attempted-rape-allegations/6656876>

26. PNG police hold off on threat to storm Manus Island detention centre

Local MP says failure to turn three men accused of rape over to authorities entrenches view that managers see their Australian employees as above the law

The Guardian
Calla Wahlquist
Friday 31 July 2015 07.03 AEST

Papua New Guinean police appeared to hold off on a threat to storm the Manus Island detention centre on Thursday evening, after promising to arrest its managers for obstruction of justice, claiming they helped three Australian men facing sexual assault charges evade prosecution.

The three detention centre workers, who were all employed by Wilson Security, are accused of drugging and gang-raping one of their colleagues, a Papua New Guinean woman, in July. They have since been fired and repatriated to Australia, to the ire of local authorities.

The Manus Island police commander, Alex N'Drasal, told Guardian Australia on Wednesday that if the men were not returned to the country by Thursday he would "go ahead and arrest all those responsible for deporting them out of Papua New Guinea".

The Australian Department of Immigration and Border Protection said the men had been stood down and returned to Australia after an incident but the suggestion they had been removed to avoid prosecution, or without consultation with PNG authorities, was “simply wrong”.

N'Drasal, in turn, claimed he was only made aware of the rape allegation last Friday and did not speak to Australian immigration officials until Tuesday, almost two weeks after the woman is said to have been raped.

According to Australian Associated Press the woman made an official complaint to police on Wednesday morning and supplied some evidence. The crime of rape carries the death penalty in PNG.

N'Drasal did not return calls by Guardian Australia on Thursday. According to reports by the ABC, Manus Island police were demanding the return of the men by 4.06pm, the formal close of business time in PNG, or arrests would follow. That deadline passed with no reports of activity at the detention centre and it was unclear whether police would follow through.

Two additional flights were sent to Manus Island on Thursday, the ABC reported, amid unconfirmed reports staff were being evacuated from the detention centre.

The Manus Island MP, Ronnie Knight, told Guardian Australia the failure to turn the men over to PNG authorities entrenched the view among locals that those running the detention centre felt their Australian employees to be above the law.

“It’s a slap in the face because there’s already an issue there that is very, very raw for our people, and that is the murder of Reza Barati,” Knight said.

Barati, a 23-year-old Iranian asylum seeker, was killed during riots at the detention centre on 17 February, which injured 70 others.

Two PNG men, G4S guard Louie Efi and Salvation Army worker Joshua Kaluvia, were charged with his murder and are awaiting trial.

But Knight and others are suspicious about why police have been unable to locate and charge two more men, an Australian and a New Zealander, who are also suspects in Barati’s murder. “Our people see it as if our local guys are being made scapegoats for this,” he said.

Knight said charging managers with obstruction of justice would go some way toward easing those tensions.

It’s only a summary charge – the penalty, even if they were found guilty following a trial, is not likely to be anything more than a hefty fine – but, Knight said, “at least it’s something that is seen to be done”

He added: “We just hope that common sense prevails and these people can come back and face these charges ... why would they not come back, just to clear their name?”

“At the end of the day they have to respect the sovereignty of Manus and of Papua New Guinea. These are our laws and you can’t just run away from this kind of thing.

“We have people from Papua New Guinea in this situation in Australia who Australia has thrown the book at. Why should these Australians be allowed to get away?”

The Department of Immigration and Border Protection has declined to comment, beyond confirming that three former detention centre workers are back in Australia.

Wilson Security has also been contacted for comment.

<http://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2015/jul/31/png-police-hold-off-on-threat-to-storm-manus-island-detention-centre>

27. Deadline passes on PNG police threat to arrest Australian managers on Manus Island

Sydney Morning Herald
July 30, 2015 - 8:26PM
Nicole Hasham

Arrogance rather than the threat of the death penalty drove the federal government's decision to allow three Australian workers on Manus Island accused of sexual assault to return home, a national lawyers group says.

It comes as a Thursday afternoon deadline set by Papua New Guinean police for the return of the three men passed. It was unclear late on Thursday if police intended to carry out their threat to arrest Australian managers at the Manus Island detention centre if the workers were not returned.

At about 5pm, sources on the island said they were not aware of police action at the centre.

In mid-July, three Australian detention centre guards were allegedly found naked with a woman who claimed she had been drugged and sexually assaulted. The guards are now back in Australia.

They were employees of Wilson Security, which is contracted by the detention centre's operator, Transfield Services. The woman was a local employee of the centre.

Rape convictions can attract the death penalty in PNG. However, the nation has not carried out executions since the 1950s.

Australian Lawyers Alliance spokesman Greg Barns, a barrister and former Liberal Party staffer, did not believe the death penalty was a "live issue".

Rather, the conduct of immigration officials was "just typical of the arrogance" of the federal government, he said.

"This would appear to be another example of the Australian government and its contractors essentially regarding Manus Island as an Australian jail ... the PNG police and legal system is treated with contempt," he said.

"The conduct and attitude [of Australian officials] flies in the face of statements by the Abbott and Rudd governments that this detention centre is a partnership [between the two nations]."

PNG police have expressed anger that the three workers were allowed to leave while the incident was being investigated.

On Wednesday, the ABC reported PNG police had confirmed the attempted rape allegation and demanded the Australians be returned by close of business Thursday.

Provincial Police Commissioner Alex N'Drasal reportedly accused the managers of allowing the Australians to leave the country, which "prevented the course of justice", and threatened to arrest them.

The Department of Immigration and Border Protection has showed no signs of complying with that request, but says it is cooperating with PNG police.

On Thursday, a department spokeswoman said the allegations were subject to a police investigation and it would make no further comment.

The department has previously said no criminal allegations were made at the time it became aware of the incident, but the alleged behaviour was not considered appropriate and the male staff were stood down and returned to Australia, with the knowledge and agreement from PNG police.

The department has rejected suggestions it engaged in a "cover up".

<http://www.smh.com.au/federal-politics/political-news/deadline-passes-on-png-police-threat-to-arrest-australian-managers-on-manus-island-20150730-ginr7l.html>

28. PNG to ban foreign advisers claiming they could be spying, make local staff lazy

ABC Radio CAF - AM

By Papua New Guinea correspondent Liam Cochrane

Posted Fri 31 Jul 2015, 7:16am

Papua New Guinea's prime minister has announced a ban on all foreign advisers working for his government, saying they make local staff lazy, and they could be spying.

The ban, which will take effect on January 1, 2016, will significantly affect the several hundred Australian advisers helping the government as part of a \$500 million dollar aid program.

During a session of PNG's parliament, prime minister Peter O'Neill was asked about the decline of his country's national intelligence organisation and the possibility foreign advisers were spying on PNG.

Mr O'Neill said it was important to rebuild the nation's spy agency.

"We need to revamp it, we need to fund it, work closely with many intelligence agencies around the world and we are working closely with some of the best today," he said.

"They've already come in and they've already starting helping rebuilding capacity within the national intelligence organisation and at my invitation."

Mr O'Neill then dropped a bombshell, clearly aimed at Australian advisers working in areas such as policing, law and justice, treasury, planning and health.

"We've got people working in many of our departments that are working as advisers and it has led to two things," he said.

"One is making our own people quite lazy. They're not able to take over civil decisions, they are over-dependent on consultants and advisers and sometimes many of those decisions are not ... in the best interests of our nation.

"So our government has taken a deliberate decision that by the end of the year, all foreign consultants and advisers, their contracts will end by 31st of December."

Mr O'Neill then took aim at one particular group of advisers — the 70-odd Australian Federal Police officers working to improve PNG's law and order situation.

"If we need to recruit experts, it will be recruited by PNG government as an employee of the PNG government," he said.

"That includes policemen, that includes all the other consultants in every line department."

Australia is the dominant aid partner to PNG and the announcement of a ban comes at a time of tension between the two countries over the Manus Island detention centre and a diplomatic blunder regarding Bougainville.

'PNG acting in frustration it does not control advisers'

Jenny Haywood-Jones, the Myer Foundation Melanesia program director at the Lowy Institute for International Policy, said she was surprised the collecting of intelligence could be connected to advisers.

"Of course governments in the region and in particular in Papua New Guinea know that people that are advisers answerable to the Australian Government are reporting back to the Australian Government but I wouldn't regard that as intelligence or spying," she said.

"I think perhaps it's reacting to a little bit of suspicion or frustration that the PNG government doesn't have control of all the people that work ... essentially for the government or in delivering government services."

Ms Haywood-Jones said a ban on Australian advisers would have a dramatic impact on the aid program throwing staff contracts and long-term development into chaos.

The announcement appeared to take Australia's Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade by surprise.

In a written statement to the ABC, a spokeswoman said just this: "We are aware of the prime minister's comments. We will be discussing this with the government of Papua New Guinea."

<http://www.abc.net.au/news/2015-07-31/png-prime-minister-bans-foreign-advisors/6661946>

29. Nauru: asylum seekers needing medical care to be flown to PNG, not Australia

Exclusive: an internal document obtained by Guardian Australia says detainees referred for further treatment will be sent to a hospital in Papua New Guinea

The Guardian
Helen Davidson & Paul Farrell
Thursday 30 July 2015 12.18 AEST

Asylum seekers held on Nauru who need medical care will no longer be flown to Australia but instead taken to Papua New Guinea, in a move which will likely stop people seeking legal injunctions against their detention.

According to an internal document obtained by Guardian Australia, detainees who are referred by International Health and Medical Services (IHMS) for further medical investigation or treatment will now be sent to the Pacific International hospital in Port Moresby.

Previously detainees from the Nauru and Manus Island detention facilities have been flown to Australia for medical care, and a number of people have taken the opportunity to launch legal action and prevent their return to the centre.

The Pacific International, which opened earlier this year, has been touted as a modern, well equipped medical facility, but as a private hospital is only accessible by the wealthy. Outside its walls, health indicators for PNG are poor, with high rates of infant mortality, extremely high levels of maternal mortality and little access to medical care for the largely rural population.

While receiving treatment in Port Moresby patients will be given accommodation, food, and transport to the hospital and allowed to make regular phone calls, the document states.

However, it also warns: "once you have undergone your medical investigation or treatment, you will return to Nauru."

"If you decline to transfer to Port Moresby for your appointment, you will be considered to have refused medical treatment. A new appointment in Australia or another country will not be arranged for you."

If a detainee chooses to remain in Nauru they will continue to receive the available medical care.

There have been several cases of asylum seekers who were flown from Nauru to Australia for medical care and then lodged a legal injunction to prevent their return.

One case is currently before the courts in Darwin. The family of a five-year-old girl are seeking to stop their return due to the extreme psychological distress of their daughter.

According to several medical and psychiatric reports, the young girl is diagnosed with post traumatic stress disorder and has displayed multiple acts of self harm, nightmares and bedwetting. Another report from a psychologist said depression and extreme anxiety were "pervasive throughout all areas of her life". One psychiatrist's reports said that was triggered by reminders of Nauru.

A review by former integrity commissioner Philip Moss revealed numerous allegations and substantiated many claims of sexual and other abuse at the Australian-run detention centre on the island.

Jacob Varghese, principal lawyer at Maurice Blackburn in Melbourne, said the policy change would be "a new attempt to even more prevent scrutiny of the conditions in which people are being held in detention".

"We know from previous experience the government has covered up the bad conditions in Nauru, and it took whistleblowers to force the Moss review which discovered how bad things really were" Varghese said.

"At the moment one of the ways we are finding out what happens is when people come to Australia for treatment there is an opportunity for lawyers and social workers in Australia to hear first hand what those conditions are like."

Medical treatment in Australia provides a "brief window" where detainees can access the Australian justice system "and to close off that window would be just another attempt to prevent scrutiny of what we all know is terrible ... Nauru is effectively Australia's Guantánamo Bay," said Varghese.

"We're effectively holding people but away from supervision by Australian courts. That's the entire purpose."

Greens senator Sarah Hanson-Young told Guardian Australia the move was "ludicrous" when asylum seekers "can and should be brought here to Australia."

"This policy is more about keeping refugees from being able to access help and legal assistance in Australia than the health of those who are sick and in need of care," she said in a statement.

"The Australian government is so determined to keep people from coming to Australia they're prepared to risk the health of men, women and children.

"The World Health Organisation says PNG has the worst health status in the Pacific. The maternal death rate in PNG is one of the worst in the world. Sending pregnant women to PNG to have their babies is a dumb and dangerous idea."

In April a joint statement from more than 100 refugee and legal groups called for the immediate halt of transfers back to Nauru and Manus Island of asylum seekers and babies born in detention. At that stage more than 200 people had been brought to Australia for childbirth or medical treatment.

IHMS referred all queries to the department of immigration and border protection. The department has been contacted for comment.

<http://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/jul/30/nauru-asylum-seekers-needing-medical-care-to-be-flown-to-png-not-australia>

30. MEDIA RELEASE: Manus detainees ask for help as violence threat increases

MANUS ISLAND DETAINEES ASK FOR HELP AS VIOLENCE THREATS INCREASE

ADVOCATES DEMAND: BRING BACK THE EX-PATS INVOLVED IN ATTACK ON REZA BARATI

Thursday July 30, 2015
Refugee Action Coalition
Ian Rintoul
mobile 0417 275 713

Rumours of possible violent clashes between local PNG people and Wilson Security over the alleged rape of the local PNG detention administration worker has also raised anxieties among the asylum seekers that they could be the victims of any attack on the detention centre, as they were on 17 February 2014, when Reza Barati was killed

There have been threats of violence since the incident on 17 February this year, when families of the woman involved demanded that Wilson's hand over the security guards allegedly involved in the assault on the woman.

Transfield immediately issued warnings to staff not to leave the accommodation after 6pm.

There are concerns that staff will be withdrawn from the detention centre as concerns escalate about a possible attack on staff.

"We are asking for help. We are not safe," one asylum seeker said from Manus Island.

The incident also raises concerns about the possible use of the Border Force Act against any whistleblowers who have information about the response of Immigration and Transfield to the incident.

The alleged rape and the recent murder and machete mutilation on two local security workers have also raised anxieties among those living in the transit accommodation in East Lorengau.

The concerns are growing as today's 'close-of-business' deadline imposed by the PNG Police Commissioner for Transfield to bring back the guards sent off the island following the incident draws closer.

The move by Transfield to send the guards off the island raises parallels with the actions by previous management, G4S, in the aftermath of the killing of Reza Barati in 2014.

"There seems to be a pattern of cover-up and perverting the course of justice on Manus Island. It is not only the alleged attackers in the recent incident who should be brought back to Manus Island," said Ian Rintoul, spokesperson for the Refugee Action Coalition.

"We want the expats identified at the time as being involved in the killing of Reza Barati to also be brought back to Manus Island so his murder can be properly investigated. For too long the Immigration department and detention centre managements have acted with impunity regarding the abuses and violence associated with the detention regime."

For more information contact Ian Rintoul 0417 275 713.

31. Vietnamese community call on Federal Government to protect asylum seekers sent back to Vietnam

ABC News Online
By political reporter Eric Tlozek
Posted Sun 26 Jul 2015, 6:12pm

The Vietnamese community has urged the Australian Government to protect a group of asylum seekers it has reportedly sent back to Vietnam.

The Victorian president of the Vietnamese Community in Australia, Bon Nguyen, said he had been told at least some of the 42 Vietnamese asylum seekers intercepted off the coast of Western Australia last week arrived back in Vietnam overnight.

"Just because on the track record of the Vietnamese Communist regime of what they do to the people trying to escape the regime," Mr Nguyen said.

"I have a great fear for their safety.

"If [the] Australian Government has returned them back to Vietnam already, please have some sort of monitor program so that our Australian embassies in Vietnam can actually keep an eye on them."

Greens Senator Sarah Hanson-Young said the Government had broken international law in returning the asylum seekers back into danger.

The Refugee Convention prohibits the return of people to a place where their life or freedom may be threatened on account of religious, racial, social or political factors.

Ms Hanson-Young said asylum seekers returned by Australia earlier this year were facing persecution.

"Many of those people have been imprisoned, children have been banned from going to school and a number of them have been punished as a result of trying to flee Vietnam as asylum seekers," she said.

"It's a breach of international law and it flies in the face of the refugee convention."

The Government has refused to say whether or not it has returned the asylum seekers.

<http://www.abc.net.au/news/2015-07-26/vietnamese-community-call-on-government-to-protect-asylum-seeke/6649208>

32. Vietnamese asylum seekers returned by plane in the dead of night: reports

Sydney Morning Herald
July 27, 2015 - 12:37PM
Nicole Hasham

Australian authorities used the cover of darkness to whisk back a group of Vietnamese asylum seekers to their homeland by plane, where three of them have been detained, a Vietnamese advocacy group says.

Prime Minister Tony Abbott on Monday refused to comment on the reports, instead questioning the strength of Labor's commitment to turning back asylum seeker boats after it adopted the policy at the weekend.

There are reports that the group of asylum seekers, which is thought to include two babies, arrived back in Vietnam on Sunday. Australian authorities are believed to have intercepted the group's boat off the coast of Dampier in Western Australia last week.

VOICE spokesman Trung Doan, whose Melbourne-based organisation advocates for Vietnamese people in need of protection, said the group of 46 people arrived in Ho Chi Minh city by plane about 1pm on Sunday.

Quoting sources in Vietnam, he said the asylum seekers were earlier transferred from their boat to an Australian vessel, where they were interviewed by authorities.

Mr Doan said the asylum seekers were then moved to a larger navy ship and taken to an unknown island off the Australian mainland, where they departed by plane on Saturday night.

After touching down in Vietnam, he said the group was transported by road to Vinh Thuan province. Forty-three asylum seekers were allowed to return home but three members of the group have been detained for further questioning, Mr Doan said.

"There was no explanation. [The three people] were taken ... to the provincial centre and that indicates they would be in for serious interrogation," he said.

He said the asylum seekers comprised two extended family groups – mostly Christians, but also Buddhists. He believed one family were experienced boat fishers, and the families pooled their money to buy the boat, which he said departed Vietnam on July 2.

There had been speculation the group was fleeing religious persecution, but Mr Doan said he did not believe this was the case.

Mr Doan said sources in Vietnam reported members of the returned group had lost weight "and looked downtrodden".

"They didn't know anything about Australia's attitude to boat people ... They thought Australia, being a civilised country, would treat them better than the Vietnamese authorities," he said.

Fairfax Media asked Immigration Minister Peter Dutton to substantiate the reports. A spokeswoman said the government would not comment on "operational matters".

Mr Abbott said Australia would "act in accordance with Australia's national interests and not to run a shipping news service for people smugglers".

He claimed his government succeeded on border protection because, unlike the former Labor government, "we haven't felt the need to broadcast what government is doing on a moment by moment basis. We haven't felt the need to big-note ourselves".

Labor on Saturday resolved to allow boat turn-backs - a decision opposed by key party figures including frontbencher Anthony Albanese

It also pledged to double Australia's refugee intake over a decade, commit \$450 million to the United Nations refugee work in south-east Asia and the Pacific, and lead development of a regional "humanitarian framework".

Mr Abbott claimed Labor was "dangerously divided" on border security "and in many respects almost unrecognisable from the Greens".

He said Labor's national conference suggested if the party returned to power it would be a "re-run of [former prime minister] Kevin Rudd who, as you know, promised to turn back boats but in fact more than 800 illegal boats arrived on Labor's watch."

Greens senator Sarah Hanson-Young said reports the asylum seekers were handed to Vietnamese authorities were "extremely alarming".

"The Abbott government must come clean with what it has been done with these men, women and children," she said.

"There are grave fears that those handed back to the Vietnamese authorities will be punished, jailed and further abused as a result of trying to escape."

According to Human Rights Watch, Vietnam's human rights record is "dire in all key areas" and the communist state "suppresses virtually all forms of political dissent, using a broad array of repressive measures" including torture.

<http://www.smh.com.au/federal-politics/political-news/vietnamese-asylum-seekers-returned-by-plane-in-the-dead-of-night-reports-20150727-gil671.html>

33. Three Vietnamese asylum seekers detained after WA navy intervention, Voice Australia group says

ABC News Online

By political reporter Peta Donald

First posted Mon 27 Jul 2015, 7:13pm

Updated Mon 27 Jul 2015, 7:18pm

A group of 46 Vietnamese asylum seekers, who almost made it to Australia by boat, have been flown home, arriving on Sunday afternoon, according to a Vietnamese community group in Australia.

"The locals told me they saw them taken one by one into the police station for questioning," Trung Doan, secretary of Voice Australia said.

"They had lost weight, they looked gaunt and very sad."

Mr Doan said he had been told the group, which included men, women and two babies, was interviewed on an Australian navy ship and then taken to an on-land airstrip, flown to Ho Chi Minh City and transferred overland to Binh Thuan Province — the starting point for their journey by boat to Australia.

Forty-three of the asylum seekers were released by local police, but two men and one woman were driven in a police vehicle to a provincial detention centre, according to Mr Doan.

The asylum seeker boat was spotted off Dampier in Western Australia at first light on July 20.

Since then, the Prime Minister, the Immigration Minister and the Immigration Department have refused to provide information, saying they do not comment on operational matters.

Mr Doan said he was told when the asylum seekers were interviewed by Australian authorities at sea, they were assured that they should feel at ease, because what they said would not be given to Vietnamese authorities.

But according to relatives, the information was then passed on, he said.

"That is contrary to the promise that the Australian authorities gave to these people when the interview started," Mr Doan said.

The asylum seekers were mainly fishermen, who had pooled their money to buy a boat, and spent around three weeks at sea before being intercepted, according to Mr Doan.

<http://www.abc.net.au/news/2015-07-27/vietnamese-asylum-seekers-return-home-after-navy-intervention/6652228>

34. Sarah Hanson-Young refers asylum seeker health providers to federal police

International Health and Medical Services referred to the AFP after a series of revelations about it published by Guardian Australia

The Guardian
Bridie Jabour, Paul Farrell and Nick Evershed
Thursday 30 July 2015 13.12 AEST

The healthcare providers for asylum seekers in Australian detention have been referred to the federal police over allegations it misled the immigration department about the quality of care.

Greens senator Sarah Hanson-Young referred International Health and Medical Services (IHMS) to the police after a series of revelations published by Guardian Australia.

The allegations referred are:

- four staff at Manus Island detention centre were working without police checks which were required by their agreement with the Australian government
- three staff who had not obtained required police checks were omitted from monthly reports so IHMS continued to meet contractual targets
- IHMS falsified medical complaint records to lead the government to believe they were meeting incident reporting targets
- IHMS could not confirm all staff working in Perth had undergone Working with Children checks (WWCs)

Hanson-Young notes in the letter that failure to meet certain targets is an offence which carries financial penalties for IHMS but the company may have breached Australian law by allegedly giving false information and reports.

Failure to meet the obligation of requiring WWCs can be punished by financial penalties and imprisonment.

"I am concerned that these allegations indicate that IHMS is providing misleading information to the department of immigration in their reporting," Hanson-Young writes in the letter to AFP commissioner Andrew Colvin.

"I am concerned that if this information is relied upon by the government, people depending upon the services of IHMS will receive sub-standard medical care."

Hanson-Young has requested the AFP launch an investigation. The AFP has been contacted for comment.

Earlier this month Guardian Australia published a series of revelations, obtained through leaked documents, about how IHMS operated healthcare services in Australia's detention centres.

The immigration department is examining the claims, with oversight from the minister for immigration and border protection, Peter Dutton, after Tony Abbott said they should be looked at. IHMS is also looking at the revelations.

Dutton has warned immigration contractors who do not perform could lose their work within the detention centres.

The documents revealed personal medical records of asylum seekers have been handed over by IHMS to Australia's immigration department for "political purposes", potentially in breach of privacy laws.

IHMS told staff to "grab from the excuse bag" when it failed to meet targets and there were significant risks to the health of asylum seekers when IHMS failed to meet targets.

IHMS also privately acknowledged fraud was inevitable as it tried to meet government targets.

<http://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2015/jul/30/sarah-hanson-young-refers-asylum-seeker-health-providers-to-federal-police>