

Project SafeCom News and Updates

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1. Mike Seccombe: The failed state of PNG

In exchange for its part in Australia's offshore detention regime, Papua New Guinea's corrupt governance has been ignored, leaving the country on the brink of collapse.

The Saturday Paper
April 30, 2016
Mike Seccombe

When it is put to one Papua New Guinea old hand that the country seems perilously close to becoming a failed state, he demurs forcefully.

"It is not close to being a failed state," he says. "It is a failed state, and has been for some years.

"Within government the struggle between good and evil is over. It is now a kleptocratic government. The only struggle is over who gets how much. There is theft on a scale that has no parallels outside Africa."

The speaker won't be named – for good reason – but he is a former senior Australian government official with intimate knowledge of the running of Australia's northern neighbour going back many decades.

During the five years since the election of the current government, he and other experts say, corruption and dysfunction have become vastly worse in PNG's institutions – the parliament, law enforcement, sections of the bureaucracy. And now it is failing economically, too.

This week the story that dominated news in Australia was Tuesday's finding by PNG's Supreme Court that Australia's detention of asylum seekers on Manus Island was illegal and unconstitutional. The following day Prime Minister Peter O'Neill announced that the detention centre would be shut down.

But there was another bit of news that went largely unnoticed. Paul Flanagan caught it. Flanagan is a former Australian treasury official who served as chief adviser to the PNG treasury between 2011 and 2013, and who is now *persona non grata* in Port Moresby as a result of his public pronouncements on the dire mismanagement of the country's economy.

You have to be careful about putting your name to criticism these days if you ever hope to get back into PNG. Hence the reluctance of our old hand, quoted above.

On Monday, Flanagan notes, the ratings agency Moody's downgraded PNG's credit rating. Again.

"They took it down to B2," he says. "In some ways, that's not very significant. Because they already were four levels below junk bond status. Now they're five levels below."

He went on: "The timing is particularly challenging, though, as a further external comment on the quality of their economic management."

The country has a budget crisis and a foreign exchange crisis. It's looking to the World Bank for a bailout because it can't raise money. It's bouncing cheques on its creditors.

"Papua New Guinea has been in big economic messes before," Flanagan says. "Twice in the early 1990s they needed IMF/World Bank programs to dig them out."

This time might turn out even worse, yet all the focus in Australia has been on Manus. That's understandable but too narrow, in the view of Flanagan and other experts. They believe the economic crisis, the corruption, mismanagement and Manus are related issues.

"Unfortunately, I think it's the case that we are fostering this bad stuff," Flanagan says.

"There are a lot of people in PNG who hoped Australia would stand up for the things we expect from a democracy, like following the rule of law. The silence of Australia now is notably different from what we did in the mid-2000s."

Australia looks away

Another of the foremost experts on PNG, Professor Stephen Howes, director of the Development Policy Centre at Australia National University's College of Asia & the Pacific, concurs with that assessment.

"In the past, Australia has taken a stand where governance is an issue, particularly in relation to corruption, because corruption is such an important theme to the aid program. And we provide half-a-billion dollars in aid," he says.

The Australian government's commitment to housing its refugees and asylum seekers offshore has made us dependent on the continued goodwill of Peter O'Neill.

"This dependence on PNG," Howes says, "has made us much less willing to speak out."

Even as other institutions have declined, says our anonymous old hand, one vital institution has remained substantially trustworthy: the court system.

"The Supreme Court is still a functioning institution, though it too is becoming a bit of a battleground," he says.

FULL STORY AT <https://www.thesaturdaypaper.com.au/news/immigration/2016/04/30/the-failed-state-png/14619384003181>

2. The Saturday Paper: Manus, Nauru detention: this is not our Australia

As PNG rules detention on Manus Island illegal, the situation on Nauru worsens daily, with self-harm and child suicide attempts rife.

The Saturday Paper
April 30, 2016
Martin McKenzie-Murray

It is difficult to write with restraint now. In fact, it is simply difficult to write. The pleasures of my craft are unavailable to me, and they seem hardly to matter anyway. I've been told, by those in Nauru's camps, that seven people have attempted suicide or serious self-harm in the past 24 hours. Razor blades have been swallowed; washing powder consumed by children. One man soaked himself in petrol and set himself alight before his wife and a United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees inspector. As I write, photos are being sent to me of the Iranian man's scorched body. A wicked percentage of it is melted. On Friday, he died.

All this is made more difficult by the fact one of the suicide attempts was made by a source of mine, a young woman. I had inquired about her wellbeing, assuming she might have known someone affected. In fact, she told me, she was one of those who had tried to take her life. "Last night I swallowed washing powder. A lady did the same. Ambulance took both of us to medical. An hour later two boys, they also did the same and were taken to medical. Their ages are 16 and 13."

The conditions in Nauru's camps have been deteriorating since their inception, as has been repeatedly reported in these, and other, pages. It is tempting to view these past 24 hours as a horrific and inevitable climax, but that supposes a subsequent resolution. This is not that kind of story. There is no catharsis here for asylum seekers – the camps were conceived bleakly and they remain bleak. Time is experienced as agonising stasis. The conditions that are described as deteriorating are largely psychological, and they have devolved rapidly. If children aren't self-harming, they are witnessing such acts, or being abused in circumstances ill-prepared to prevent it. Desperation and nihilism reign.

Half an hour after I learnt of Ruby's suicide attempt, Labor's shadow immigration minister Richard Marles was on television declaring that "offshore processing has been the single most important policy that any Australian government has made". The insensitivity is jarring, but no more than the hyperbole. The policy is not without its brutal effectiveness, but one struggles to compare either its influence or benefits with the Statute of Westminster, the abolition of White Australia, or the deregulation undertaken in the 1980s. His words were a calamity of moral and historical misjudgement, but evidently there is no appetite for Labor to qualify this policy. Richard Marles was doubling down.

'Unconstitutional and illegal'

The angst experienced by those on Nauru was stirred by this week's decision by Papua New Guinea's Supreme Court, which asserted, in a 5-0 ruling, the illegality of the Manus Island detention centre. The court found that it unconstitutionally deprived the liberty of its occupants. "In the present case," the court wrote, "the undisputed facts clearly reveal that the asylum seekers had no intention of entering and remaining in PNG. Their destination was and continues to be Australia. They did not enter PNG and do not remain in PNG on their own accord. This is confirmed by the very fact of their forceful transfer and continued detention on MIPC by the PNG and Australian governments. It was the joint efforts of the Australian and PNG governments that has seen the asylum seekers brought into PNG and kept at the MIPC against their will. This [sic] arrangements were outside the Constitutional and legal framework in PNG."

The court then ordered "both the Australian and Papua New Guinea governments shall forthwith take all steps necessary to cease and prevent the continued unconstitutional and illegal detention of the asylum seekers or transferees at the relocation centre on Manus Island and the continued breach of the asylum seekers or transferees Constitutional and human rights".

The judgement was a long time coming, but the Australian government was shambolically unprepared for it. What has been strong about the offshore policy is the government's unwavering commitment to it; but its legal, moral and logistical substance has always been weak. Immigration Minister Peter Dutton said the government had "anticipated" the ruling, but could offer no evidence for it. Dutton's comment also had the consequence of undermining his prime minister, who contradicted his immigration minister when he lamented that his government did not have a "road map" for what happens next. Rather, we

were all asked to find comfort in earnest negotiations. The two men, however, sang in unison when both declared that none of the 900 men on Manus would ever be relocated to Australia. “We cannot be misty-eyed about this,” said the prime minister.

One option might be to transform the detention centre into an “open” camp – as happened in Nauru – by essentially opening the front gate so that asylum seekers might come and go. This would presumably erase the issue of detention. But while this might satisfy the constitution, it is far from satisfactory. Manus is a small island, and the centre itself is a long way from the main town. Local hostility here is arguably even greater than on Nauru, so much so that only eight of more than 400 men determined to be refugees have chosen settlement outside the centre.

This isn’t a flippant choice. In February 2014, PNG police and locals breached the centre and began beating asylum seekers. Reza Barati, a 23-year-old Iranian man, was bludgeoned repeatedly with a large piece of wood topped with a nail. While Barati lay bleeding, a large stone was dropped on his head. An autopsy revealed “severe brain trauma”. In Scott Morrison’s press conference at the time, as immigration minister, the riot was described as a “disturbance” that resulted in “minor damage”. Barati was blamed for leaving the safety of the camp, which he never did and which asylum seekers will now likely be encouraged to do.

One of Barati’s killers – who was convicted this month – was on the run for five months before his arrest. He later escaped prison while awaiting sentencing. Before the trial, witnesses to the killing spoke to this paper about receiving death threats. This is what these men consider when the prospect of open camps is raised. “For those that have been deemed to be legitimate refugees,” PNG’s prime minister, Peter O’Neill, said this week, “we invite them to live in Papua New Guinea only if they want to be a part of our society and make a contribution to our community. It is clear that several of these refugees do not want to settle in Papua New Guinea and that is their decision.”

But only last month, speaking at the National Press Club, O’Neill admitted his country struggled to settle refugees. In what appeared to be a plea for more aid money, O’Neill said: “We have issues about cost of the resettlement, who is going to pay for it? Certainly [the] Papua New Guinea government does not have the resources to resettle the refugees as required.”

There is another hurdle to the legislative solution, and that’s the growing distaste the PNG government has for it. O’Neill, once a keen advocate for the arrangement with Australia, now describes the centre as a sore on his country’s reputation. In the same Canberra speech, O’Neill characterised the centre as a “problem” he had inherited from his predecessors. We may wait and see if there is a sufficient price that might restore his previous enthusiasm.

It seems Marles is wondering the same thing. This week, he urged Dutton to find solutions. The Australian government could offer PNG more money, Marles proposed, or be encouraged to change its laws. Bizarrely, he offered these as two discrete tactics, but the provision of money itself does not suddenly make the centre legal. Marles was offering one solution, not two – that PNG might pass laws legalising the centre in exchange for more cash. It would be difficult to find a balder description of how cravenly we sell off our responsibilities.

FULL STORY AT <https://www.thesaturdaypaper.com.au/news/politics/2016/04/30/manus-nauru-detention-this-not-our-australia/14619384003189>

3. Chasing Asylum first look review – asylum seeker documentary is vital and gut-wrenching

This viscerally intense exposé of Australia’s asylum seeker policy will make audiences feel like a brick smashed to pieces with a sledgehammer

The Guardian
Luke Buckmaster
Friday 29 April 2016 06.00 AEST

If the debate about asylum seekers attempting to come to Australia has made your heart a little heavy over the years, be prepared for it to feel like a brick smashed to pieces with a sledgehammer. The full, muscular weight of the feature documentary format has finally tackled the subject with *Chasing Asylum*, a viscerally intense exposé given gravitas by Academy and Emmy award-winning film-maker Eva Orner.

Orner won an Oscar for producing 2007’s *Taxi to the Dark Side*, documentarian Alex Gibney’s fastidious investigation into torture practices conducted by America in the name of the “war on terror”. Like Gibney’s film, *Chasing Asylum* paints a sobering overall picture of a government that asks its citizens to abide by rule of law, but shows little obligation to do so itself (Australia’s treatment of asylum seekers has been found to violate the United Nations Convention Against Torture and has recently been ruled illegal by Papua New Guinea).

Also like *Taxi to the Dark Side*, it’s the small details rather than the broad brushstrokes in this grim but important film that are breathtakingly inhumane. In the director’s chair for the second time (following 2013’s *The Network*, which documents Afghanistan’s first independent television station) Orner doesn’t debate whether the boats have stopped. Her stance is they have; her remit is to examine the human cost.

Early moments in the film include vision of the obligatory Citizen Kane of Australian xenophobia speeches: John Howard huffing and puffing about who arrives and the circumstances with which they come. Chasing Asylum is largely comprised of news clips, text inserts, talking heads and secretly recorded, previously unseen footage. It's the sort of film that, as they say, only comes together in the editing room; some fine forensic assembling here by editor and co-producer Annabelle Johnson.

Low-fi phone-recorded vision bobs around Manus Island detention centre beds and thoroughfares. The place looks like a militarised tent city, or a collection of temporary edifices Walter White might spend an afternoon in. Splotches of graffiti here and there – words such as “welcome to coffin” and “kill us” – hint at the horrors inside, of things we mostly cannot see.

Social workers and support workers recount their stories. One remembers a sign announcing that staff needed to know how to use a Hoffman knife. When asked why, she was told they were the knives used to cut ropes after hangings. Another recalls living quarters infused with the stench of faeces and daily self-harm: detainees cutting themselves, burning themselves, starving themselves, stitching their lips and eyelids shut.

A former Manus Island safety and security officer, Martin (who quit the job after receiving death threats) says he was shocked to see people living in a renovated second world war shed: a huge hot tin hut in thick, humid, tropical conditions. Orner also visits the home countries of asylum seekers to examine the harsh or harrowing circumstances that prompted them to leave.

Chasing Asylum is a 90-minute compendium of shame, captivating for the wrong reasons. At times it is so sad that your eyes well and chills run down your spine. Hot-button Australian documentaries that feel so urgent are rare; when they are made well they come on like cattle prodders to the senses.

Last year the coal seam gas exposé Frackman arrived, a terror-inducing polemic with a premise like a B-grade horror movie: the ground beneath us has literally been sold and filled with poison. The heart of director Tony Krawitz's 2011 film Tall Man, which examines circumstances surrounding the death in custody of Cameron Mulrunji Doomadgee, wept with a sense of injustice.

In Orner's documentary we are exposed to many injustices experienced by many people; the Australian dream inverted and thrown to the dogs. With scant access to material that could depict the detainees' physical and emotional journeys in detail, the director is forced to take a snapshot approach. The film becomes a string of heartbreaking vignettes, matched to a basic timeline of events and facts.

Orner allows her subjects to speak for themselves, in their own voice. Her clearly anti-detention centre stance is communicated through the film's configuration rather than in front of the camera or by voiceover (a Moore or Pilger-esque onscreen presence would surely have felt self-indulgent).

A balance of sorts is established in visions of chest-beating politicians, all of whom refused to be interviewed (save for Malcolm Fraser – in one of his last interviews – to whom the film is dedicated). Arguments from ministers that stopping the boats saves deaths at sea is touched on but given short shrift; cut to David Marr saying that the government claiming a humane approach, given the circumstances, is “profoundly hypocritical”.

The counter argument is straight out of high school philosophy: the idea one immoral act can be committed in order to prevent a worse one. More could have been made of how this kind of reasoning is used in the ping-pong of political discourse; some more meat on the bones about how Labor became wedged and backflipped. Or why Middle Australia – most of whose recent forebears are immigrants – don't seem to have qualms in backing a now bipartisan approach.

But perhaps Chasing Asylum wasn't the best platform for that. Its remit, after all, was to examine the human cost of stopping the boats. On those terms it is not just successful, but awfully and unforgettably effective: vital, evocative and gut-wrenching.

---->>>> *Chasing Asylum premieres at the Human Rights Arts & Film festival (touring nationally in May and June). Guardian Australia's Helen Davidson will be moderating the festival's screening of Chasing Asylum and Q&A in Darwin on 7 June*

<http://www.theguardian.com/film/2016/apr/29/chasing-asylum-first-look-review-asylum-seeker-documentary-is-vital-and-gut-wrenching>

4. Eva Orner on Chasing Asylum: ‘Every whistleblower that I interviewed wept’

New film features shocking footage from within offshore detention centres. ‘I wanted to make a film that would shame Australia’, the film-maker says

The Guardian
Brigid Delaney
Saturday 30 April 2016 13.37 AEST

Australia's current refugee policy has been informed by a succession of prime ministers, and four of them have a part to play in the development of Chasing Asylum: a stunning new documentary directed by Eva Orner.

The Oscar-winning Australian was living in New York in 2007 when Kevin Rudd was elected. She thought Labor's return to power would bring an end to the so-called Pacific Solution, where asylum seekers were transported to detention centres on islands away from the mainland. "We stayed up all night celebrating the end of John Howard, and the [detention] camps closing, and then to my horror they were reopened," Orner tells Guardian Australia.

"The years went by and Abbott got in and things got worse, in terms of our refugee problem. In 2013 I couldn't believe what I was seeing – the towbacks, the children ...

"If somebody had told me in 2001, when the Pacific Solution started up, that at the beginning of 2014 it would still be going on – I would never have believed them."

Later she says: "Unless you are a journalist or working in development, most people internationally don't know about this. I wanted to make a film that would shame Australia."

FULL STORY AT <http://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2016/apr/30/eva-orner-on-chasing-asylum-every-whistleblower-that-i-interviewed-wept>

5. Michael Gordon: Behold Malcolm Abbott

The PM has no answer to the asylum seeker situation beyond inflicting more harm.

The Age
April 30, 2016 - 12:15AM
Michael Gordon

It was Malcolm Turnbull's so-called "Tampa moment", when the Prime Minister delivered the declaration on border protection that could so easily have been penned by Tony Abbott. But it was an anti-climax.

More than an hour before Turnbull faced the media in a Hobart suburb on Thursday morning, Immigration Minister Peter Dutton was having one of his regular on-air chats with Ray Hadley, the Sydney radio talkback host who was one of Abbott's strongest supporters.

Hadley began by offering "just a little bit of history" on the topic of border protection, recalling how John Howard's Pacific Solution began with the interception of a Norwegian freighter, the Tampa, taking rescued asylum seekers to Australia, and how this was "central" to the Coalition's 2001 election victory.

Hadley then confided that listeners had written to him, "a bit concerned that the Prime Minister doesn't have the stomach for what you're talking about and it's a real battle to keep these people out of the country".

Implicit were two insinuations: that, deep down, Turnbull lacked the hard, ruthless edge of Abbott, Scott Morrison and Dutton when it came to border protection; and that these people had forfeited any right to consideration.

Dutton's message to Hadley and his listeners was not to worry. "Ray, he's rock solid," Dutton assured Hadley. "I spoke to him a couple of times this morning on the phone, he's down in Tasmania [and] he's as adamant as I am that these people will not be coming to our country and we've said that from day one."

On cue, Turnbull signalled he was indeed rock solid, reprising Labor's abysmal record on boat arrivals, insisting that any transfer of refugees from Manus to Australia would restart the people smuggling trade, and coining his own seven-word slogan: "a strong Australia is a secure Australia".

On Friday the PM went further. "We can't afford to let the empathy that we feel for the desperate circumstances that many people find themselves in to cloud our judgment," he told 3AW's Neil Mitchell. "Our national security has to come first."

He also made it crystal clear that the Coalition will exploit the issue in the election campaign at every opportunity. "You cannot trust them," he said of Labor. "You would have to back hope over experience if you thought a Labor government would be safe on borders."

Earlier in the week, Turnbull had shown that he was "rock solid" on Abbott's climate change policy too, signalling his readiness to run a carbon-tax scare campaign against the Labor policy big business had tacitly endorsed.

The problem for Turnbull on both fronts, and on negative gearing and marriage equality, is that his position now sits so uncomfortably with his past statements and, more importantly, with the expectations of many who greeted his ascension with such unbridled enthusiasm and hope.

Put simply, Turnbull is disappointing voters because the story he is telling them now is not the story he conveyed before he tore down Abbott, and this goes to the heart of his "who do you trust" pitch to the electorate.

Labor insiders say this conclusion was reflected in focus group discussion this week. "For a leader who started with such high expectations and so much goodwill, what has happened must appear almost inexplicable," reported my source. "For many, he is the man who just didn't deliver."

That, of course, is an utterly premature verdict. Tuesday's budget is Turnbull's opportunity to encourage voters to reassess and engage before, either next Friday or over the weekend, he calls the formal campaign for the July 2 double dissolution election he is still strongly favoured to win.

The mantra is "jobs and growth", and Turnbull is exuding confidence about a positive reception. "People will look at that budget and say this is a government that is determined to ensure that my children and my grandchildren have great jobs in the future," he told Mitchell on Friday. We'll see.

The other problem with Turnbull's willingness to revisit Abbott's scare campaigns on boats and carbon pricing is that the nation has moved on from 2013.

On climate change, the experience was that the economy grew and emissions fell under Labor's scheme, despite the predictions of doom. Concern about global warming has grown, propelled by reports of the extent of coral bleaching on the Great Barrier Reef. The new Labor policy has been generally well-received. As Business Council of Australia chief executive Jennifer Westacott put it, the policy has the potential to provide a springboard to "the energy and climate change policy durability needed to support the critical transformation to a lower emission future".

A hard-line on border protection is still a big electoral plus for the Coalition, but many in the middle struggle to see how both sides of politics can persist with an approach that demonstrably continues to destroy the minds and spirits of vulnerable people who came seeking Australia's protection.

They struggle to reconcile Dutton's boast, that the government had been preparing for the PNG Supreme Court's decision that the detention of about 900 asylum seekers was in clear breach of PNG's constitution, with Turnbull's candid admission that there is "no roadmap" of where to go now.

They are bewildered by Turnbull's blithe assertion that the detainees can return to their home countries, when most have been found to have a genuine fear of persecution if they go back; or that they can settle in PNG, when the handful who have left the centre are living in fear and poverty.

They are puzzled that the government says it is negotiating with third countries to resettle those on Nauru and Manus, but can only name Cambodia, where tens of millions of dollars have been spent for negligible return.

They are baffled that John Howard managed to stop the boats, with most of those found to be refugees on Nauru and Manus settled in Australia and New Zealand, yet Turnbull (and Labor) assert that no one from Nauru or Manus will end up in Australia or New Zealand because this would re-start the smugglers' trade. Turnbull went so far on Friday as to suggest resettlement in a country like New Zealand would be used as a marketing opportunity by the smugglers.

But, most of all, people are nonplussed that the man who prides himself on policy agility and possessing empathy and the "imagination that enables you to walk in somebody else's shoes", now asserts that we can't let empathy cloud our judgment and has no answer beyond inflicting more harm.

<http://www.theage.com.au/comment/ behold-malcolm-abbott-20160429-goi6er.html>

6. New Manus and Nauru operator signals plans to quit detention centre business

Ferrovial Services, which owns more than 50% of ASX-listed Broadspectrum, formerly Transfield, says these services were not a core part of the valuation

The Guardian
Ben Doherty and agencies
Saturday 30 April 2016 12.54 AEST

The Spanish company taking control of the business operating the Manus Island and Nauru detention centres has signalled it plans to step away from the offshore processing facilities in the future.

Ferrovial Services, which now owns more than 50% of the ASX-listed Broadspectrum, formerly Transfield, says it does not plan to stay in the business of operating offshore detention centres.

"In relation to the provision of services at the regional processing centres in Nauru and Manus province, these services were not a core part of the valuation and the acquisition rationale of the offer, and it is not a strategic activity in Ferrovial's portfolio," the company said in a statement.

"Ferrovial's view is that this activity will not form part of its services offering in the future."

Papua New Guinea has already said it will close the Manus Island detention centre after the country's supreme court found it was illegal, but Broadspectrum has a contract to operate Nauru until 2017.

Broadspectrum's board of directors has recommended shareholders accept Ferrovia's \$1.50-per share takeover offer.

It has received acceptances from 59% of shareholders but needs to reach 90% before it can compulsorily acquire the rest of the company.

Shen Narayanasamy, the executive director of No Business in Abuse, is now in Europe meeting investors and financial backers of Ferrovia, lobbying against the company becoming involved in Australia's offshore detention regime.

"It looks as if Ferrovia has seen the error of its ways and is trying to back away from the legal and financial liabilities that have been so apparent in the commercial operation of these illegal camps," she said.

"Ferrovia has clearly recognised the risks of owning such a severely compromised outfit are just too burdensome. The big question now is when will Ferrovia close the camps."

<http://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2016/apr/30/new-manus-and-nauru-operator-signals-plans-to-quit-detention-centre-business>

7. Former bikie deported from New Zealand 'cut ties to Rebels in 2009'

Australian with no criminal history handcuffed and flown home because federal police intelligence tied him to gang he left seven years earlier after 'nightmare' of intimidation

The Guardian
Joshua Robertson
Tuesday 26 April 2016 10.49 AEST

A truck driver and his family say their first overseas trip led to his "unjustified" arrest and deportation because Australian federal police intelligence tied him to a bikie gang he left in harrowing circumstances seven years earlier.

David Paul, who travelled with his family to New Zealand to watch a rugby tournament in February, was handcuffed on arrival, held in a cell then flown home.

Paul has no criminal history but was refused entry to New Zealand because of AFP advice he was a member of the Rebels motorcycle club, immigration and police officers in Auckland told the family.

But Paul and his ex-wife, Laura, insist that he severed ties with the Rebels amid threats to his family in 2009, describing his year-long stint across several New South Wales chapters as a "nightmare" of personal intimidation and financial exploitation.

The couple, whom Guardian Australia has identified using aliases, alleged clubmates held a gun to Paul's head in front of his children when he resisted joining, and later "milked" him of almost \$400,000 from a personal injury payout.

Later, when Paul made final moves to quit the club, they said, the family's small business was destroyed by arson and they were threatened, forcing them into hiding.

His deportation from New Zealand seven years later raises questions about the currency of AFP intelligence that is shared overseas and its lasting restrictions on people no longer in gangs.

"I've been looking over my shoulder all these years getting away from the club and now I find out I'm still on the AFP's books as a member," Paul said. "You think about some of the mistakes you make. I've never had one come back and bite me like this."

Laura said his arrest in front of their teenage son and deportation were "upsetting and unjustified". "We are in an 'interesting' position, which means we are caught in the middle of two extremes," she said.

"He is still considered a 'bikie' after seven years by the police, yet [was only] able to 'leave' the club under extremely scary circumstances. The fact that the government said if people left the club they could move forward with their lives is just not true. We don't know what action we can take to fix this as we are obviously not alone."

The couple said they did not report the threats to their family to police out of fear of reprisals but assumed the NSW gang squad had recorded Paul's departure from the Rebels.

They were unaware his details had been shared with the AFP, and later NZ immigration, under a far-reaching initiative overseen by the immigration minister and former Queensland police officer Peter Dutton.

There is no formal mechanism in NSW for people to declare their dissociation from a club. Former bikies can do so in Queensland under a system introduced by police after several supreme court judges made scathing criticisms of the use of intelligence on past membership to justify harsh prison and bail conditions. A Queensland government review has found separately identifying criminals and non-criminals in bikie gangs is “difficult” and “complex”.

Guardian Australia revealed in December that NZ had begun refusing entry to Australian bikies without criminal records.

Paul was refused entry under the same section of NZ immigration law, on the grounds he was likely to commit an offence leading to jail time, or be a threat or risk to security, public order or the public interest.

A national police certificate, seen by Guardian Australia, shows Paul has no criminal record in Australia.

The AFP refused to comment on Paul’s case or whether it independently sought to verify his gang membership before sharing the information with NZ immigration. It refused to say how people could demonstrate they had quit gangs, or whether it would continue to share or update intelligence on past members with foreign agencies.

A spokeswoman said it and “law enforcement partners in Australia act appropriately and in accordance with Australian and international policies and guidelines regarding the provision of information to foreign jurisdictions”.

Senior police sources said the AFP typically relied on state police intelligence on bikies.

Guardian Australia asked the NSW police gangs squad what steps it took to ensure its intelligence was current before it shared information with the AFP. It refused to comment.

Laura said she believed her husband was targeted for recruitment by the Rebels because of his payout from a truck accident that left him “lonely and ill” and with a brain injury that impaired his judgment.

He had resisted pressure to join the club until a 2006 visit by six Rebels who held a gun to his head in front of his two children and stole his motorbike, she said.

An on-again, off-again stint with the club led him to hand over money for clubhouse renovations, flights and accommodation for interstate club rides, and a tattoo parlour he held in name only, she said. A senior club figure, who eventually gave Paul permission to leave, took \$50,000 in loans that were never repaid.

Laura said she was “stunned” to learn all his payout money had been drained by Christmas 2009, including \$300,000 to the Rebels over just six months.

“Everyone assumes they get their money from drug sales, whereas I think a huge percentage of it is just milking people,” she said. “They really do target people and I knew a few because someone had died in the family or whatever. All the wives go, ‘Where’s the money gone?’”

Paul said: “I got conned pretty hard, I’ll admit that. I did what I could and got away, but there was a few people that had their claws into you and they don’t like letting them out.”

He said when the business was destroyed by fire just before he quit, a police officer at the scene told him it was “a vandal attack”, adding, “It must suck to be a bikie.”

Laura said she had continued to receive threats after changing her address and phone number. “I had a couple over the phone and a couple of knocks on the door,” she said.

“It was pretty horrendous – ‘I know where you are and there’s going to be big repercussions for you and your family.’

“Probably a year later I got a phone call from one of them saying, ‘You thought you could get away with me not getting your phone number?’”

<http://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2016/apr/26/former-bikie-deported-from-new-zealand-cut-ties-to-rebels-in-2009>

8. Detention centre staff say careers and lives were damaged by speaking out

Young Liberty for Law Reform report argues legislative reforms have created a climate of fear and intimidation

The Guardian
Ben Doherty
Wednesday 27 April 2016 09.31 AEST

Whistleblowers in Australia’s immigration detention regime say their complaints have been mocked or ignored, they have been abused online and in person, and their careers have been damaged as a result of speaking out.

A new report from Young Liberty for Law Reform carries testimony from former detention centre workers who say their careers and personal lives were harmed because they spoke out – they say in the public interest – about abuses they witnessed in offshore detention.

Steve Kilburn, a former security officer on Manus Island, said:

"We put in report after report and never heard anything back. There was no incentive to do the right thing. Those who raised legitimate concerns were often labelled as 'troublemakers'. And those who refused to follow orders were sacked."

Chris Iacono, a former Salvation Army employee on Manus Island and Nauru, said:

"When we reported issues we were seeing... we were told we were bleeding hearts and to toughen up."

Nicole Judge, a former Salvation Army employee on Manus Island and Nauru, said:

"One time this guy was slamming his head on the concrete and we were told to just sit there and not pay attention. And if you seemed too upset you'd lose your job. People were getting fired constantly for not following orders."

Karen Wells, a security guard at the Manus Island, Curtin and Woomera detention centres said:

"When I first saw things that were wrong, I wrote a report. [Management] would read it in front of you and tell you, 'You need to harden up'. They'd say, 'You're getting soft in your old age'."

Martin Appleby, a security officer and trainer on Manus Island, said:

"I got abused, accused on Facebook, social media. In terms of employment, the impact whistleblowing had on my life was not being able to gain employment again in that industry, for about eight months."

The YLLR report, to be released in Melbourne on Wednesday night, argues legislative reforms and changes in government practice have created "a climate of fear and a culture of intimidation within the agencies, organisations and companies responsible for enacting Australia's policies".

The chief legislative instrument is the Australian Border Force Act, enacted last year, which carries a two-year prison term for disclosure of "protected information" by an "entrusted person", which includes all department staff, anybody hired by the department, or hired by a department contractor or subcontractor, to perform any role within the detention system.

While nobody has yet been prosecuted under the act, the YLLR report contends it has had a chilling effect on potential whistleblowers who are unsure of their legal protections under the Public Interest Disclosure Act.

"The ABF Act limits a person's ability to disclose information by threat of termination of employment, or through other measures such as reduction in salary, reassignment of duties," it says. "The fear of prosecution and reprisal prevents whistleblowers from speaking out."

The government has consistently maintained the Border Force Act will not result in doctors, social workers, security guards or department staff being jailed for speaking publicly about concerns.

On the day the law was enacted last July, the Australian Border Force commissioner, Roman Quaedvlieg, said the provisions around jail sentences "have been over-interpreted somewhat".

"This is about the leaking of classified information that could compromise operational security or our sovereignty."

He said the provisions were not designed to stop "people having the right to be outspoken in the community about a range of things".

Jordina Rust, one of the report's co-authors, told The Guardian that even people seeking to raise concerns internally faced barriers.

"It became apparent to us that people are being actively discouraged from speaking up, not only externally but also within organisations. You don't necessarily have to speak to the media to be penalised in the current culture of secrecy."

Rust said the Border Force Act, regardless of an absence of prosecutions, had a powerful, chilling effect on people's perception about their freedom to speak up on behalf of asylum seekers.

"From the people we have spoken with, there is a very strong sense that the Border Force Act is not about imprisoning doctors but is about intimidating doctors and other people working in these environments, entrenching that culture of secrecy."

The YLLR report recommends section 6 – the secrecy provisions – of the Australian Border Force Act be repealed, arguing the Crimes Act gave the government broad powers to prosecute people for unauthorised disclosures.

<http://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2016/apr/27/detention-centre-staff-say-careers-and-lives-were-damaged-by-speaking-out>

9. MEDIA RELEASE: Nauru in meltdown: two women missing; three snatched in Brisbane

THREE REFUGEES SNATCHED FROM BRISBANE: DESTINED FOR NAURU?

Wednesday April 27, 2016
Refugee Action Coalition
Ian Rintoul
mobile 0417 275 713

There are fears that three refugees taken around 3.00am from the Brisbane Transit Accommodation by Border Force officers have been sent back to Nauru. Two of them were seen being bodily carried out of the detention centre by their arms and legs.

The three, one Somali woman, an Iranian and a Sri Lankan, had been brought from Nauru to Australia for medical treatment.

The transfer comes as Nauru has gone into complete meltdown. The visit by the UNHCR has resulted in protest by refugees and asylum seekers. Today will be the 39th day of protests by the asylum seekers in the family camp.

Last night (Tuesday night) four people attempted suicide by drinking washing powder and have been taken to the IHMS clinic.

This morning (Wednesday 27 April), an Iranian refugee has attempted to self-immolate at Nibok Camp in front of UNHCR representatives. Protests against the UNHCR representatives following the incident have forced them to leave Nibok camp.

Two Iranian women, Marziyeh Faghih (28) and Amineh Shajira, (34) have been missing since Sunday. It is feared they may have disappeared at sea, in an attempt to flee the island or die trying. But no search attempt has been mounted by land or sea despite appeals to Connect case managers or police.

This morning's transfer to Nauru from BITA seems to be a vindictive move by the Immigration Department to re-establish their authority following the PNG Supreme Court finding that Manus Island was unlawful.

"There is no justification for the forced transfers from BITA this morning," said Ian Rintoul, spokesperson for the Refugee Action Coalition.

"It is sheer bloody-mindedness for the Minister to send these refugees back to Nauru just to show that he had that power. The use of Border Force officers has created panic amongst refugees and asylum seekers in the detention centre.

"Nauru is in complete social meltdown. The protests, and the attempted suicides reveal the sheer desperation of refugees and asylum seekers left in limbo for almost three years. Manus has to close; Nauru has to close."

For more information contact Ian Rintoul 0417 275 713

10. Iranian refugee severely burnt after setting himself on fire on Nauru

Video shows man 23-year-old Iranian man soaked in liquid and shouting before being engulfed in flames

The Guardian
Helen Davidson and Ben Doherty
Wednesday 27 April 2016 13.42 AEST

A man has suffered severe burns after setting himself on fire, allegedly in front of United Nations representatives, at an immigration settlement site in Nauru.

A video of the incident, seen by Guardian Australia, shows the 23-year-old Iranian man soaked in liquid, standing in a clearing and shouting to the people around him.

He has been identified as Omid, a recognised refugee from Iran. Omid turned 23 last December and is married.

According to one witness, Omid said: "This is how tired we are, this action will prove how exhausted we are. I cannot take it anymore."

In the video Omid then sets himself on fire. Amid screams from onlookers he flees but is chased by a group of people who tackle him to the ground and smother the flames with sheets and remove his burning and melted clothing. There are extensive burns across his body and head but he is clearly alive and conscious.

He has been taken to the Republic of Nauru hospital but medical evacuation to Australia is being considered.

Guardian Australia has chosen not to publish the video.

The witness said the man had met with representatives of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) on Tuesday morning, who were on the island to interview asylum seekers and refugees. They have also been inspecting the Manus Island offshore centre. According to reports from detainees at both places, the focus has been largely on the mental health of detainees.

The Australian Department of Immigration and Border Protection said it was not in a position to confirm or deny the incident but has been sent written questions.

The Nauruan government confirmed the incident, labelling it “a political protest to coincide with the visit by representatives from UNHCR”.

“Unfortunately we have seen protests like this during high-profile visits, as some from within the refugee community try and influence the Australian government’s offshore processing policies.”

The statement urged people not to self-harm in protest, adding “there is no value in such behaviour”.

The government had invested “considerable time and money” into assisting the refugees, it said.

The Nauruan government is yet to answer any questions on recent actions by its justice system to charge and convict people – including at least two but possibly up to four refugees – for attempting suicide.

According to advocates, UN representatives on Nauru also witnessed the detainee protest – now in its 39th consecutive day. Many have reported feeling they were prevented from meeting with UN representatives, or told there was nothing that could be done to help them.

A video of the protest is claimed to show UN representatives on the other side of a fence but this has not been confirmed. In it people shout “UN help us” and “ABF shame on you”.

The Guardian has contacted the UNHCR seeking comment.

A letter written and signed by detainees on Sunday pleaded for the Australian people to help.

“We are wondering why our lives were saved in the ocean, if we died in the sea it would be wonderful because we can’t cope with these inhuman actions,” it said.

“Your government took our joy, they took our hope, dreams and locked us up inside the fence.”

Advocates have also reported that three people were removed from BITA (Brisbane Immigration Transit Accommodation) early this morning and transferred back to Nauru.

They described the current mood on Nauru and Manus Island as an emergency situation, particularly in light of Tuesday’s PNG supreme court decision ruling the detention of asylum seekers illegal.

Sources on Nauru say five people attempted to self-harm on Wednesday night and one on Wednesday morning.

The ABC reported on Wednesday a plane from Port Moresby to Manus Island was grounded after a man – believed to be in Port Moresby for medical treatment – began screaming as it taxied down the runway.

One woman on Nauru, who said she had trained in psychology, said she was concerned for the detainees there, after a series of significant protests and immigration policy changes had left them unaffected.

“It made all disappointed,” she said. “Because first was Christmas Island and second was ‘Let them stay’ and now Manus. Let us be clear, it won’t help us and it made all angry and nervous ... What I saw tonight was so dangerous. All thinking about dying, they are just thinking how?”

<http://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2016/apr/27/iranian-asylum-seeker-severely-burnt-after-setting-himself-on-fire-on-nauru>

11. Nauru refugee sets himself on fire in protest, man in critical condition, Peter Dutton says

ABC News Online

By political reporter Stephanie Anderson and Sarah Farnsworth

First posted Wed 27 Apr 2016, 11:12am

Updated Wed 27 Apr 2016, 12:54pm

A refugee remains in a critical condition after setting himself on fire on Nauru, in what the Nauruan Government has described as a "political protest".

An immediate medical evacuation has been requested for the 23-year-old Iranian.

A video obtained by the ABC appears to show a man suffering burns to large portions of his body, after he set himself on fire outside the centre earlier today.

He is heard moaning.

Immigration Minister Peter Dutton said that Australia was planning to "provide an air lift for him later tonight".

But Mr Dutton said the man remained in a "very serious condition".

"He is in a very, very serious condition and his outlook is not good at all," he said.

Mr Dutton also confirmed that there had been other incidents of self-harm at the centre.

"There have been other incidents where people have self-harmed or sought to self-harm," he said.

"What we've been very clear about is that if people come to Australia for medical assistance they'll be returning back to Nauru once that medical assistance has been provided.

"We have returned three people back to Nauru from Australia and they have returned because the medical assistance that they sought in Australia has been provided."

UNHCR staff witnessed protest

The incident coincided with a visit from three Canberra-based UNHCR staff, who all witnessed the man's actions.

The ABC understands the man is named Omid Saki and has been on Nauru for three years.

An Iranian woman witnessed the incident and told the ABC that Omid got distressed during a meeting with UNHCR staff.

"He got very angry and distressed and burnt himself," she said.

"None of them helped. None of them called an ambulance, they just called the police and ran away.

"Doctors didn't know what to do. They didn't have supplies to help him."

She said doctors have informed her that Omid suffered burns to 50 per cent of his body "and he might die".

Influence of refugee advocates criticised

In a statement, the Nauruan Government said the man "set himself on fire, while making a political protest to coincide with the visit by representatives from UNHCR".

The statement also cited the influence of the refugee community on Nauru, who they state are trying to influence the immigration policies of the Australian Government.

"The Government of Nauru continues to urge our refugee community to refrain from such protests for the protection of themselves and others," it stated.

Mr Dutton made similar comments directed at refugee advocates, saying that the mixed messages to asylum seekers were "not helpful".

"Nauru has invested considerable time and money into services to assist the refugee community socially, emotionally, medically and vocationally, and to ensure all refugees are safe in our country. There is no value in such behaviour."

The incident follows a disturbance at the centre earlier this month, when chairs and tables were thrown at staff.

Two asylum seekers received medical treatment following the disturbance at the centre, which according to the latest update from Australia's Department of Immigration and Border Protection still held 468 people "under open centre arrangements".

Asylum seeker advocates had also previously circulated photos of graffiti, they claim is from inside the centre, insulting Australian Border Force workers.

The incident coincides with a ruling from Papua New Guinea's Supreme Court, which yesterday stated that ruled Australia's detention of asylum seekers on Manus Island is illegal.

<http://www.abc.net.au/news/2016-04-27/refugee-sets-himself-on-fire-on-nauru/7363530>

12. Horrifying video emerges showing Nauru refugee setting himself on fire

The Age
April 27, 2016 - 3:45PM
Nicole Hasham
With Michael Gordon and Bianca Hall

Horrifying video footage has emerged showing a distressed refugee at Nauru setting himself alight, amid fears over the deteriorating mental health of those Australia has sent to the remote Pacific Island.

The incident occurred on Wednesday morning after a visit from the United Nations refugee agency, UNHCR, to see conditions faced by refugees and asylum seekers.

Immigration Minister Peter Dutton confirmed the incident on Wednesday afternoon, saying a 23-year-old Iranian man who sought to travel to Australia by boat had "self-immolated this morning".

"He's in a very serious condition and the plan is to provide an air lift for him later tonight," Mr Dutton said, adding that people who came to Australia for medical assistance would later be "returning back to Nauru".

"His outlook is not good at all. I send our best wishes and condolences in the circumstances to his wife as I understand it, to family."

The video shows a highly agitated man yelling, before setting himself alight. Bystanders scream in horror and rush in to douse the flames with water and blankets.

The victim's clothes appears to be burnt off during the incident, after which he lies face down on the ground, apparently suffering severe injuries.

A separate video has also emerged that appears to show the man being treated in hospital after the incident. The victim is standing beside a hospital bed and at first seems calm, but then begins screaming uncontrollably.

The camera pans to a nurse who appears distressed at the scene before her, and is vomiting into a bucket.

The Nauru government said the man was in a critical condition and counselling had been offered to witnesses, service providers and the man's friends and family.

It is understood the man's first name is Omid. A friend of the family who identified himself as Arman told Fairfax Media on Wednesday afternoon that Omid's wife was distraught after witnessing the incident, which he said came without warning.

"She saw everything. She was screaming and she wanted everyone to put the fire out," Arman said.

He feared Omid was now "really dying" and questioned the delay in airlifting him to Australia.

Asked why he believed Omid set himself alight, Arman said "we are in hell. Nauru is like a burning hell - all of us are suffering here."

A source at Nauru said the man, who lived in the community at the Nibok settlement, poured a 20-litre bottle of petrol over himself and cried "this is how tired we are, this action will prove how exhausted we are. I cannot take it anymore."

The source said the man spoke to UNHCR representatives of "the intolerable mental and physical pressure on refugees and particularly on himself, who [is] imprisoned at Nauru."

UNHCR regional representative Thomas Albrecht, who was at the scene of the incident, said his organisation was concerned about the "grave mental state of asylum seekers and refugees" and urgent action was needed to prevent further suffering and address worsening mental health.

The UNHCR had been in Nauru since Sunday conducting a monitoring mission of arrangements for asylum seekers and refugees transferred from Australia.

A refugee advocate who is in close contact with those at Nauru said tensions were high after the Papua New Guinea Supreme Court on Tuesday ruled the Manus Island detention centre was illegal, opening up the prospect that detainees there could be released.

"People are thinking 'what about us'. They are feeling desperate," the advocate said, adding she believed the man had burns to 80 per cent of his body.

The incident follows a Nauruan court decision in February to convict and fine a refugee for attempted suicide in a move authorities said was designed to "stamp out the practice".

In a statement the Nauru government said incidents such as that on Wednesday morning were an attempt to "influence the Australian government's offshore processing policies".

"Emergency services and medical personnel responded quickly and the person is being treated in hospital for serious burns. Nauru's new hospital is now open and the patient is receiving excellent medical care, while medical evacuation to Australia is currently being considered," it said.

The Nauruan government urged refugees "to refrain from such protests for the protection of themselves and others".

"Nauru has invested considerable time and money into services to assist the refugee community socially, emotionally, medically and vocationally, and to ensure all refugees are safe in our country. There is no value in such behaviour," it said.

Greens immigration spokeswoman Senator Sarah Hanson-Young said the situation at Nauru "requires immediate, emergency intervention".

"The Immigration Minister must explain exactly what is happening on Nauru and explain what the government will do to get out of offshore detention before more lives are lost," she said.

<http://www.theage.com.au/federal-politics/political-news/horrifying-video-emerges-showing-nauru-refugee-setting-himself-on-fire-20160427-gog0gx.html>

13. Nauru refugee flown to Australia for medical treatment after setting himself on fire

ABC News Online
By political reporter Stephanie Anderson
First posted Thu 28 Apr 2016, 9:33am
Updated Thu 28 Apr 2016, 12:50pm

A refugee who set himself on fire has been airlifted from Nauru to Australia for urgent medical treatment.

The 23-year-old Iranian man, known as Omid, remains in a critical condition after he set himself on fire outside the Nauruan detention centre early on Tuesday.

A video obtained by the ABC appears to show the man suffering burns to large portions of his body.

The man's flight arrived in Brisbane on Thursday afternoon.

Greens senator Sarah Hanson-Young said Omid was in a "very, very critical condition", while Immigration Minister Peter Dutton said the situation remained "very, very dire".

Further information has been sought from the Department of Immigration and Border Protection.

The incident coincided with a visit from three Canberra-based UNHCR staff, who all witnessed the man's actions.

The ABC understands the man has been on Nauru for three years. His wife remains on Nauru.

<http://www.abc.net.au/news/2016-04-28/refugee-being-flown-to-australia-after-setting-himself-on-fire/7366638>

14. Nauru refugee who set himself on fire in critical condition in Brisbane hospital

ABC News Online

First posted Fri 29 Apr 2016, 5:38am

Updated Fri 29 Apr 2016, 5:51am

There are serious concerns for a refugee who was flown to the Royal Brisbane and Women's Hospital burns unit after setting himself on fire at the Nauruan detention centre.

The 23-year-old Iranian was airlifted to Brisbane yesterday accompanied by his wife and transported to hospital by ambulance.

At that time, he was in a critical condition with third degree burns to most of his torso.

Last night, a small group held a candlelight vigil outside the hospital.

Anglican priest Father Nicholas Whereat said they wanted to show their support for the man.

"We feel deeply saddened that anyone would get to the point where they would consider doing such a thing, let alone actually going ahead and doing it," he said.

"We're here to be with this man and to support him and to hopefully let him know that at this time he's not alone and there are people in Australia that do care about him as a human being."

The ABC understands his transportation from Nauru was delayed because of difficulties stabilising him due to the large areas of his body that are burnt.

Yesterday, Greens senator Sarah Hanson-Young said Omid was in a "very, very critical condition", while Immigration Minister Peter Dutton said the situation remained "very, very dire".

It is believed the man had been on Nauru for three years.

<http://www.abc.net.au/news/2016-04-29/nauru-refugee-set-himself-on-fire-prompts-brisbane-vigil/7369400>

15. Refugee who set himself alight on Nauru dies in hospital

Omid, 23, dies in Brisbane after setting himself on fire outside refugee centre during a visit by UN officials

The Guardian

Helen Davidson and Ben Doherty

Friday 29 April 2016 14.53 AEST

The 23-year-old Iranian who set himself alight in protest outside a refugee compound on the island of Nauru has died in a Brisbane hospital.

Omid was a recognised refugee who was living in Nibok settlement on Nauru with his wife. He set fire to himself during a visit by United Nations officials on Wednesday morning.

Before his death, his wife criticised delays in getting him to hospital in Queensland.

He was taken to the Republic of Nauru hospital before being airlifted out almost a day later, and his wife has questioned the delay, blaming Australian officials for taking too long.

Omid was treated at the Royal Brisbane and Women's hospital but died on Friday.

His wife told Guardian Australia through an interpreter that once her husband was taken to the Nauru hospital it took two hours for a doctor from International Health and Medical Services to arrive and treat him, and he was unable to be given intravenous pain relief.

"Staff in Nauru hospital couldn't help Omid in any way because they were unequipped," she said.

"A lack of proper equipment and facilities was the reason that staff couldn't help and treat Omid in the Nauru hospital."

She said he suffered a cardiac arrest during the night, and doctors performed emergency surgery.

The Australian Department of Immigration and Border Protection (DIBP) confirmed Omid's death and said appropriate support was being provided to his wife and friends.

His death will be referred to the Queensland coroner.

The Nauru government offered condolences to Omid's family.

"We are providing support to all impacted by this sad event," it said.

Medical advocacy group Doctors for Refugees have criticised the length of time it took to get Omid out of Nauru and to superior medical care in Brisbane.

"The family in Nauru were told that DIBP was unable to arrange a pilot for the medivac," co-founder Dr Barri Phatarfod said.

"We understand a flight arrived at 6.30am, some 22 hours after the severe burns and leaving Omid susceptible to life-threatening infection as well."

"Coming so soon after... revelations of DIBP delays in the tragic case of [Hamid] Kehazaei [who died of a preventable infection in Manus Island detention in 2014], it's quite incredible that this should happen."

The Australian immigration minister, Peter Dutton, said on Friday there was no delay in moving Omid.

"The advice that I've received is that there was no delay. Obviously people realise that Nauru is 4,500km or so away from Australia. There's a long distance involved and there were other medical issues – I'm advised – [which] presented as well, which made the decision difficult about the time to airlift this person.

"There are obligations that need to be met in terms of the requirements around pilots and air crew, as I'm advised, particularly given the long distance there, and the long distance back to Australia."

The minister said people should "rely on the facts" rather than jumping to conclusions. Dutton would not comment on the "other medical issues" which complicated Omid's transfer.

Asked specifically if Omid could not be moved because there was not a pilot available, he said: "I don't have any comment. The only other thing I would say is, you're talking about an air ambulance, this is not a plane that's sitting on the runway at Nauru. The decision ... was made, very quickly, once the condition of the patient was understood."

Omid was taken by Careflight from Nauru on Thursday morning, about 22 hours after he self-immolated. It's not clear when Careflight received the call to attend to Omid.

His wife said doctors in Brisbane told her he was brain dead when he arrived, she said.

She was brought to Brisbane also, and waited in the hospital with him, under guard.

Some friends had spoken to her, she said, attempting to offer comfort before she was stopped from speaking.

"Currently I am in isolation in way that I am not allowed to talk to anyone or do interviews," she said. "They have taken away my mobile phone so no one can contact me and I am being observed constantly by the officers that are accompanying me."

Omid's protest in front of UNHCR officials, who were conducting a monitoring visit, was captured on mobile phone video. The short clip shows him standing in a clearing, soaked in an unknown liquid believed to be accelerant, and yelling.

According to one witness, Omid yelled in protest: "This is how tired we are, this action will prove how exhausted we are. I cannot take it anymore."

He then set himself alight.

The graphic video of his self-immolation shows a few people nearby, who did not appear to be expecting him to go through with his threat. When he did, they ran and tackled him to the ground, smothering the flames which had engulfed his body. He lay on the ground moaning, with severe burns across his body and head.

A second video shows him in the Nauru hospital, clearly conscious as he paces up and down while screaming – with severe burns apparent to his arms, legs, chest, and back – while distressed family members plead for him to be given assistance and painkillers.

Omid's wife requested that the graphic videos and images of Omid not be shared or published out of concern for his family. She was able to inform them of his injuries on Thursday.

Within hours of Omid's act the Nauru government publicly deemed it a "political protest to coincide with the visit by representatives from UNHCR".

On Thursday night a vigil was held outside the Brisbane hospital, and detainees on Nauru wore T-shirts bearing Omid's name while they held their 40th consecutive daily protest.

<http://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2016/apr/29/refugee-who-set-himself-alight-on-nauru-dies-of-injuries-in-hospital>

16. Nauru refugee who set himself on fire dies in Brisbane hospital

ABC News Online

First posted Fri 29 Apr 2016, 12:19pm

Updated Fri 29 Apr 2016, 12:40pm

An Iranian refugee who set himself on fire at the Nauru detention centre has died in a Brisbane hospital, Immigration Minister Peter Dutton has confirmed.

The 23-year-old Iranian was airlifted to Brisbane yesterday with third-degree burns to most of his torso.

In a statement, Mr Dutton said that "appropriate support" was being provided to his wife and friends of the man, known as Omid.

"The man was taken to Republic of Nauru Hospital for medical treatment by the Nauruan authorities," he said.

"He was then transferred to Australia by air ambulance for medical treatment.

"The man passed away this afternoon in a Brisbane hospital.

"The department expresses its sympathies to his wife, family and friends."

The death will be reported to the Queensland coroner.

Omid set himself on fire outside the Nauruan detention centre on Tuesday.

The incident coincided with a visit from three Canberra-based UNHCR staff, who all witnessed the man's actions.

The ABC understands the man has been on Nauru for three years.

The ABC spoke with a witness to the incident earlier this week, who said Omid got distressed during a meeting with UNHCR staff.

"He got very angry and distressed and burnt himself," she said.

"None of them helped. None of them called an ambulance, they just called the police and ran away.

"Doctors didn't know what to do. They didn't have supplies to help him."

Mr Dutton confirmed earlier this week that there had been other incidents of self-harm at the centre.

"There have been other incidents where people have self-harmed or sought to self-harm," he said.

Greens immigration spokeswoman Sarah Hanson-Young has responded to the death.

Senator Hanson-Young directed her comments on social media towards Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull, tweeting "yes Prime Minister I am misty-eyed as I can only imagine his loved ones are too".

Mr Turnbull yesterday stated that Australia could not afford to be "misty-eyed" over border security issues.

<http://www.abc.net.au/news/2016-04-29/nauru-refugee-who-set-himself-on-fire-dies/7371112>

17. MEDIA RELEASE: Another death: more blood on Dutton's hands - a criminal system, a criminal delay

Friday April 29, 2016

Refugee Action Coalition

Ian Rintoul

mobile 0417 275 713

Offshore detention has claimed another life -- Omid's name is added to the names of Reza Barati and Hamid Khazaie, who have been killed by the detention system.

The lack of experienced staff; the lack of medical supplies; the lack of attention; the shocking conditions in the Nauru hospital and the hideous delay in arranging for Omid to be medivacced from Nauru has cost him his life.

Malcolm Turnbull, Peter Dutton are immediately responsible for his death. Just like the case of Hamid Khazaie, who needlessly died of septicaemia in 2014, there will be a coronial inquiry that can reveal the shocking conditions and political decisions that led to his death.

"Offshore processing is criminal and there was a criminal delay in Omid obtaining the treatment and care he needed. Those responsible must be held to account," said Ian Rintoul, spokesperson for the Refugee Action Coalition.

"How many more lives and souls are to be lost before the government will face up to its hypocrisy of declaring that offshore detention is about saving lives at sea, while lives are destroyed in their detention camps.

"The government must bring all those on Manus and Nauru to the Australian mainland."

Asylum seekers and refugees on Nauru have yet another reason to maintain their protests and to maintain their rage at a system that took Omid's life and just as surely systematically destroys theirs. Attached is a photo of a vigil that refugees held last night at Nibok the settlement where Omid set fire to himself on Tuesday, 26 April.

"We are so tired," Omid said as he set himself alight, speaking for all the asylum seekers and refugees on Nauru.

Today will be the 41st day of protest by the asylum seekers in the family camp on Nauru.

For more information contact Ian Rintoul 0417 275 713

18. Wife of man who died after setting fire to himself in Nauru slams delay in care

The 23-year-old Iranian asylum seeker died in hospital on Friday, but his wife says treatment on Nauru was sub-standard and blames Australian officials for delays in moving him to Brisbane

The Guardian
Helen Davidson and Ben Doherty
Friday 29 April 2016 19.56 AEST

The wife of the 23-year-old Iranian refugee who died after setting himself alight in protest on Nauru has criticised delays in getting him off the island for medical care.

The death of the man, Omid, in a Brisbane hospital Friday afternoon, comes at the end of a tumultuous week which saw the potential collapse of Australia's offshore processing regime, after Papua New Guinea announced it would close the Manus Island facility under orders from its supreme court.

On Nauru on Wednesday, during a visit by UN officials to the Nibok settlement where he lived with his wife, Omid set himself on fire, crying "this is how tired we are, this action will prove how exhausted we are. I cannot take it anymore".

Onlookers smothered the flames, and Omid was taken to the Republic of Nauru hospital before being airlifted out almost a day later. He was treated at the Royal Brisbane and Women's hospital but died on Friday.

Before he died, Omid's wife told Guardian Australia she did not expect him to survive, and blamed Australian officials for what she saw as delays in getting him to hospital in Queensland.

Speaking through an interpreter, she said that once her husband was taken to the Nauru hospital it took two hours for a doctor from International Health and Medical Services to arrive and treat him, and he was unable to be given intravenous pain relief.

She said he was not given a sheet or a place to lie down, and that the hospital "didn't even have a clean syringe".

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

She said Omid suffered a cardiac arrest during the night, and doctors performed emergency surgery with her consent. Upon arrival in Brisbane, she said doctors told her he was already brain dead.

The Australian Department of Immigration and Border Protection (DIBP) confirmed Omid's death, and said appropriate support was being provided to his wife and friends.

Omid's wife was brought to Brisbane and waited in the hospital with him, under guard. Some friends had spoken to her, she said, attempting to offer comfort before she was soon stopped from speaking.

“Currently I am in isolation in way that I am not allowed to talk to anyone or do interviews,” she said.

“They have taken away my mobile phone so no one can contact me and I am being observed constantly by the officers that are accompanying me.”

Medical advocacy group Doctors for Refugees have criticised the length of time it took to get Omid out of Nauru and to superior medical care in Brisbane.

“The family in Nauru were told that DIBP was unable to arrange a pilot for the medivac,” co-founder Dr Barri Phatarfod told the Guardian.

“We understand a flight arrived at 6.30am, some 22 hours after the severe burns and leaving Omid susceptible to life threatening infection as well.”

“Coming so soon after ... revelations of DIBP delays in the tragic case of [Hamid] Kehazaei [who died of a preventable infection in Manus Island detention in 2014], it’s quite incredible that this should happen.”

The Australian immigration minister, Peter Dutton, said on Friday his advice was there was no delay in moving Omid.

“The advice that I’ve received is that there was no delay. Obviously people realise that Nauru is 4,500km or so away from Australia. There’s a long distance involved and there were other medical issues – I’m advised – [which] presented as well, which made the decision difficult about the time to airlift this person.

“There are obligations that need to be met in terms of the requirements around pilots and air-crew, as I’m advised, particularly given the long distance there, and the long distance back to Australia.”

The minister said people should “rely on the facts” rather than jumping to conclusions. Dutton would not comment on the “other medical issues” which complicated Omid’s transfer.

Omid’s act, in front of UNHCR officials, was captured on mobile phone video.

The graphic video shows a few people nearby, who did not appear to be expecting him to go through with his threat of setting himself on fire. When he did, they ran and tackled him to the ground, smothering the flames which had engulfed his body. He lay on the ground moaning, with severe burns across his body and head.

A second video shows him in the Nauru hospital, clearly conscious as he paces up and down while screaming – with severe burns apparent to his arms, legs, chest, and back – while distressed family members plead for him to be given assistance and painkillers.

Omid’s wife requested that the graphic videos and images of Omid not be shared or published out of concern for his family. She was able to inform them of his injuries on Thursday.

Within hours of Omid’s act the Nauru government publicly deemed it a “political protest to coincide with the visit by representatives from UNHCR”.

“There is no value in such behaviour,” it said.

On Thursday night a vigil was held outside the Brisbane hospital, and detainees on Nauru wore T-shirts bearing Omid’s name while they held their 40th consecutive daily protest.

The UNHCR officials were on Nauru conducting a monitoring visit, after having visited Manus. The focus was on the “seriously deteriorated mental health of the transferred asylum-seekers and refugees” at both sites, a spokeswoman said.

Detainees reported feeling they were prevented from meeting with the representatives, or told there was nothing that could be done to help them.

A friend of Omid’s, who was present when he set himself on fire, said Omid’s purpose was not a “fake demonstration”.

“He really decided to kill himself, sacrifice himself to finally prove it to Australians that he is suffering,” he said.

Omid’s death comes at the of a tumultuous week both inside the detention centres and in Australian and PNG politics.

Despite the threat of criminal conviction, there has been a spate of self harm incidents and further protest in Nauru as detainees become increasingly desperate at the news of the imminent closure of Manus Island’s facility.

On Tuesday PNG's supreme court ruled detention of asylum seekers and refugees to be unconstitutional and illegal, and ordered its end "forthwith". The following day the PNG government announced the centre would close and that Australia must find alternative arrangements for people who did not settle in the country.

In response the Australian government said the 905 male detainees were PNG's problem, and that the supreme court ruling did not bind Australia.

The two governments are now at loggerheads over the issue.

Christmas Island and Nauru have been raised as possible destinations for the men, but the government has refused to entertain this beyond saying that Nauru had "capacity".

Dutton has suggested Manus could remain open in some altered form, and for a brief time on Friday the internal gates between compounds were open. Detainees reported elation at their newfound "freedom", including an end to body searches, but on Friday afternoon it appeared the decision was reversed.

A move to a fully 'open' centre on Manus would seem to be an impossibility, because the detention centre is within a PNG naval base. Those held inside would not be allowed free movement in and out.

New Zealand has said its offer to accept 150 refugees from Australia each year, (an agreement with the Gillard government which Australia has since abandoned) still stands.

But Australia has rejected this, Dutton saying a move to New Zealand would be a "backdoor to Australia and a green light to people smugglers".

Turnbull said settlement in a country like New Zealand "would be used by the people smugglers as a marketing opportunity."

Any move by PNG to sidestep Australia and make a deal with New Zealand would be diplomatically controversial, directly defying Australia's entrenched policy position of never allowing a boat arrival to reach it (New Zealand citizens can travel freely to Australia).

Australia and New Zealand relations have strained over Australia's hardline immigration approach, but the nations remain close. PNG is Australia's largest aid recipient and hugely dependent on Australia's economic and political support.

Next week the Manus detention regime faces a fresh legal challenge, with the possibility the supreme court in Port Moresby could order that the men held on Manus Island be compensated for their three years of illegal detention.

<http://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/apr/29/wife-of-man-who-died-after-setting-fire-to-himself-in-nauru-slams-delay-in-care>

19. Manus Island: 'Pathetic' bureaucratic response blamed for asylum seeker Hamid Khazaei's death

ABC-TV - Four Corners

By Geoff Thompson, Joel Tozer and Wayne Harley

First posted Mon 25 Apr 2016, 2:05pm

Updated Mon 25 Apr 2016, 2:50pm

The urgent medical evacuation of a gravely ill asylum seeker from Manus Island was delayed by almost 30 hours partly because a public servant had gone home for the day and did not check his emails until the following morning.

That bureaucratic delay is labelled as "pathetic" by Australian Medical Association president Dr Brian Owler on tonight's Four Corners program on ABC TV.

It also took almost five hours for the Department of Immigration and Border Protection to respond to the initial evacuation request, and when it did, the department asked why the detainee could not be treated on Manus Island.

The 24-year-old Iranian, Hamid Khazaei, had been on Manus Island for almost a year when he suddenly became unwell from a skin infection on his leg, and died 13 days later in Brisbane's Mater Hospital.

The antibiotics available on Manus Island were unable to stop the infection and it rapidly progressed to septicemia.

Mr Khazaei suffered three heart attacks and his brain began dying before he was finally evacuated to Australia for medical treatment.

Mr Khazaei was first evacuated to Port Moresby on the afternoon of Tuesday August 26, 2014.

But earlier that day a senior doctor from International SOS (ISOS) which was organising the evacuation, recommended instead that Mr Khazaei be evacuated directly to a hospital in Brisbane.

Speaking out for the first time, Dr Stewart Condon, who is now the president of Medicins San Frontieres Australia, told Four Corners that his Brisbane recommendation was not acted upon.

"That's certainly something that I strongly felt about some of these cases, that our recommendation to move to Port Moresby was inadequate," he said.

"Knowing the level of medical care available in Port Moresby and knowing that many of the similar cases we worked around the world would move to a place like Brisbane."

Doctors defy Border Force Act to speak out

Dr Condon and other doctors and healthworkers appearing in tonight's program, are risking potential imprisonment under the Border Force Act, which makes it illegal for people working within Australia's asylum seeker detention system to disclose information.

The Government has said that the Border Force Act is not designed to target doctors.

Dr David Isaacs was one of the first Australian doctors to test the legislation by speaking out after he worked on Nauru with the Government's detention health services contractor International Health and Medical Services (IHMS).

"I don't think the Border Force Act is good legislation and I think it should be challenged," he said.

"Why haven't I been prosecuted? My feeling is that this legislation is not about actually imprisoning doctors, it's about silencing doctors, and others."

Mr Khazaei was finally pronounced dead at Brisbane's Mater Hospital on September 5, 2014 after a week on life support.

Hours before his death the then immigration minister Scott Morrison praised the quality of medical care received by detainees on Manus Island and Nauru.

"When someone becomes ill, they receive outstanding care from the people who work as part of our mainland detention network and in the offshore processing centres that are under the management of the governments of Papua New Guinea and Nauru," he said.

"IHMS who work as part of that team there do an outstanding job," he added.

Mr Khazaei's death is being investigated by the Queensland coroner with a pre-inquest hearing scheduled for June 10 this year.

<http://www.abc.net.au/news/2016-04-25/manus-island-blunder-blamed-for-asylum-seeker-death/7355858>

20. Doctors blame asylum seeker Hamid Khazaei's death on Immigration's delays

The Age
April 26, 2016 - 6:08AM
Aisha Dow

A number of senior medical professionals have broken their silence about the 2014 death of Manus Island detainee Hamid Khazaei, claiming the failure to act on urgent requests to evacuate the gravely-ill asylum seeker cost him his life.

The doctors who spoke to the ABC's Four Corners program raised ongoing concerns about the level of medical care available to those inside the controversial offshore detention facilities, risking two years in jail for disclosing information about Australia's asylum seeker detention system - an offence for detention system workers under the Border Force Act.

Australian Medical Association president Brian Owler said while people might question if Mr Khazaei should have travelled from Indonesia to seek asylum in Australia, they should not accept that his death was inevitable.

"It wasn't," Professor Owler said. "He could have been saved and he could have been treated properly."

The 24-year-old Iranian soccer fan first presented to a medical clinic within the Manus Island detention centre on August 23, 2014, complaining of fever, chills and body aches.

Two days later an urgent request was filed to fly Mr Khazaei to Port Moresby in Papua New Guinea, as his condition deteriorated. As the request was filed at 1.15pm, medical staff were hopeful he would travel on a 5.30pm commercial flight, escorted by a doctor.

However Four Corners revealed it took almost five hours for the request to be responded to by a bureaucrat from the Department of Immigration and Border Protection in Canberra who questioned the advice, saying they were "wondering why" he couldn't be treated at a local hospital.

"[Department] staff on island are being pushed for this urgent transfer in the next 18 hours however I don't have adequate information to be able to escalate at this point if this is still warranted," the email said.

Professor Owler said it was this decision that sealed the young man's fate – as Mr Khazaei missed the 5.30pm flight.

"A patient with sepsis can deteriorate very quickly and that's exactly what happened," he said.

"If he had been transferred to Port Moresby... he may still be alive today. I really question what the reason was, why the transfer was delayed."

The next morning a doctor working with International SOS, the company that owns the health service contractor on Manus Island, recommended that the asylum seeker be transferred by medical air ambulance directly to Australia.

Dr Stewart Condon – now president with Médecins Sans Frontières Australia – said his advice was also ignored by public servants.

Mr Khazaei had three heart attacks after arriving at the Port Moresby hospital on August 26, a Tuesday.

"Maybe by that time he is already brain dead, although he hadn't been declared that way," Dr Condon said.

The next day the asylum seeker was finally flown to Australia, where he never regained consciousness. His life support was turned off on September 5. A bacteria called chromobacterium violaceum had caused a rare and aggressive infection that spread from a cut on his leg.

His friend, Benham Satah, who is still on Manus Island, said Mr Khazaei had talked a lot about the future.

"He was telling me he wanted to be a person that Australia always will be proud of. But Australia didn't give him a chance to prove that," Mr Satah said.

Mr Khazaei's death is being investigated by the Queensland coroner.

<http://www.theage.com.au/federal-politics/political-news/four-corners-doctors-blame-asylum-seeker-hamid-khazaeis-death-on-immigrations-delays-20160425-goeqww.html>

21. Manus detainee climbs tree in rejection of PNG refugee status

'I have never wanted to resettle in [Papua New Guinea],' says Behrouz Bouchani, a Kurdish journalist who fled Iran to seek asylum in Australia in 2013

The Guardian
Calla Wahlquist and Ben Doherty
Sunday 24 April 2016 16.55 AEST

A Manus Island asylum seeker who has been slated for release in Papua New Guinea as a processed refugee climbed a tree on Sunday to prevent guards from moving him to a crowded pre-release centre.

Behrouz Bouchani, a Kurdish journalist and writer who fled Iran to seek asylum in Australia in 2013, told Guardian Australia that he was to be moved from one of the regional processing centre's three main compounds, Foxtrot, to another compound, Oscar, because the PNG government had determined he was a genuine refugee.

The positive determination came through on Monday. The Guardian reported this week that at least 45 other asylum seekers, out of a group of about 60 who refused to put their claims to PNG, were told they had received a negative assessment. Those who receive two negative assessments face deportation.

But Bouchani – who refused to present his refugee application to Papua New Guinea because, he told Guardian Australia in November, he was brought to the country against his will – has refused to accept the determination that he should be resettled in PNG.

"I have been imprisoned here for almost three years and have been under a lot of pressure to fill in the protection application in PNG but I have constantly denied to do so," he said in a statement released by refugee advocates.

"I did not arrive in PNG and did never give the PNG government my case for asylum. I have never wanted to resettle in this country."

He is reported to have climbed a tree out of the reach of guards at 7.30am and remained there, supported by other detainees on the ground, into the afternoon.

Video footage seen by Guardian Australia showed a person who appeared to be a shirtless Bouchani sitting in the branches and saying, "I am here for my political values and western civilisation values."

A spokesman for the Department of Immigration and Border Protection said it was aware of the incident and that local authorities were onsite "to ensure the ongoing safety and welfare of the individual concerned".

The department would not comment on the refugee application.

About 500 people who received positive refugee determinations from PNG are expected to be moved to a transfer centre or resettled in PNG. About 160 asylum seekers on Manus have written to the UNHCR to ask that they be resettled in a country that is part of the UN resettlement program instead.

<http://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2016/apr/24/manus-asylum-seeker-deemed-refugee-climbs-tree-to-protest-settlement-in-png>

22. Manus Island detainees say they will be allowed outside during the day

ABC News Online

By PNG correspondent Eric Tlozek

Posted Mon 25 Apr 2016, 1:51pm

Detainees in Australia's offshore immigration detention centre on Papua New Guinea's Manus Island have said they will soon be allowed to leave detention during the day.

The 850 detainees inside the centre have been separated based on whether their refugee claims have succeeded.

They said those found to be refugees would now be allowed to leave between 7:00am and 4:00pm each day, and will be taken to the main town on Manus Island by bus.

The refugees on Manus Island are being told they must accept resettlement in Papua New Guinea, but many are still refusing to leave the detention centre.

"We feel very bad about this news," one detainee said. "Last night we couldn't sleep at all.

"After years of holding us here you pretend that we free. Why did this not happen before?"

The refugees said they would not be allowed to walk out of the centre, because it is on a PNG naval base, but they can take buses to the town of Lorengau and spend a small allowance of up to \$60 dollars a week.

The new arrangements follow a major relocation of detainees within the Manus Island centre.

The men whose claims were rejected have been put in separate compounds inside the centre and will not be allowed out.

They said they have been told their only option is go back to the country they came from.

The successful refugees are being told they must move to a transit centre closer to Lorengau, where they will be prepared for resettlement in Papua New Guinea.

Many are refusing to go because they do not want to be resettled in PNG, and are scared of crime and violence.

<http://www.abc.net.au/news/2016-04-25/manus-detainees-say-they-will-be-allowed-outside-during-the-day/7356032>

23. Iranian refugee on Manus hopes PNG will reconsider his case after tree protest

ABC News Online

By Papua New Guinea correspondent Eric Tlozek

Posted Mon 25 Apr 2016, 4:39pm

An Iranian refugee at the Manus Island detention centre said he hoped Papua New Guinea's immigration department would reconsider his case after he protested in a tree for 10 hours.

Behrouz Boochani said Australia had illegally moved him to PNG and he would not submit to the offshore processing regime.

He said the PNG Immigration and Citizenship Advisory Service gave him a positive refugee determination, even though he had refused to lodge an application with them.

They then tried to move him into a separate compound within the detention centre, along with other men found to be refugees.

Boochani, a Kurdish journalist, climbed up a tree on Sunday in protest.

"The action was completely political because we are victims of political propaganda and should be understood as political prisoners," he said.

"Australia put us in a hell prison camp under a regime of systematic torture.

"I wanted to show that this policy is cruel, inhumane, unjust and a modern form of slavery."

He was in the tree from 7:30am until 5:30pm, when officials agreed to let him stay on in his current compound and to respond to his concerns in writing.

This means Boochani remains detained with asylum seekers who have had their refugee claims refused and have been told they have no option but to return to their countries of origin.

<http://www.abc.net.au/news/2016-04-25/refugee-on-manus-hopes-png-will-reconsider-case-after-protest/7356324>

24. MEDIA RELEASE: Boochani arrested by Manus Island Immigration to force transfer

Tuesday April 26, 2016
Refugee Action Coalition
Ian Rintoul
mobile 0417 275 713

Behrouz Boochani, the Iranian asylum seeker who staged the tree protest yesterday in Foxtrot compound has been arrested at a meeting with Immigration and forcibly relocated to Oscar compound -- a compound for those found to be refugees.

Boochani had been summoned to the meeting this morning at 9.45am, following a promise yesterday that his positive refugee case would be reviewed. He never came back to Foxtrot compound.

Boochani is among a group of around 50 people who have never made an application for refuge status in PNG. Yet, on 18 April he was handed a letter indicating that he had been found to be a refugee.

Around 45 others, who have also refused to make applications, however, were handed notices that they had been rejected.

Boochani has consistently questioned the PNG assessment process that could make such directly contradictory findings.

His tree-top protest yesterday highlighted the inconsistency, the lack of transparency, and the corruption of the determination process.

Boochani is a high profile asylum seeker; a dissident Iranian journalist who has been adopted by the international journalist association, PEN, as a political prisoner detained by Australia.

Boochani's forced transfer comes at the same time as refugees are being told that the gates of Oscar and Delta compounds will be "open" tomorrow, Wednesday, 27 April, and that people who apply, will be able to leave the detention centre by bus between the hours of 7am and 4pm.

Refugees are deeply suspicious of the move; considering that Immigration has left themselves many ways that people can be left behind and thus forced to go to the transit accommodation at East Lorengau.

Many also remain fearful of locals because of the attack on the detention centre in February 2014, that left Reza Bararti dead and scores of others seriously injured.

The move to "open" the gates seems to be part of PNG Immigration attempts to avoid the consequences of the pending constitutional Supreme Court case that not only seeks orders that the detention centre be closed, but also ask for compensation for the breach of human rights inflicted on all detainees sent there from Australia.

For more information, contact Ian Rintoul 0417 275 713

25. Brisbane activists demand better treatment of refugees on Manus Island and Nauru

ABC News Online

First posted Fri 29 Apr 2016, 5:41pm

Updated Fri 29 Apr 2016, 6:34pm

Hundreds of protesters against the Manus Island and Nauru detention centres have gathered in Brisbane to demand better treatment of refugees.

Chants of "close the camps, bring them here" rang out across King George Square in the heart of the city on Friday evening.

The event was planned in response to the Papua New Guinea Supreme Court earlier this week ruling Australia's detention of asylum seekers on Manus Island was illegal.

The rally came just hours after the death of Iranian refugee Omid, who set himself on fire at the Nauru detention centre earlier this week.

The 23-year-old was airlifted to Brisbane on Thursday, a day after he sustained the burns.

Earlier on Friday, Immigration Minister Peter Dutton confirmed Omid had died in hospital.

Refugee Action Collective's Margaret McPherson said the Government was to blame for the "desperation" that drove Omid to set himself on fire.

"I say to people 'if your family was in a situation where they were going to be killed or the house burned down, you'd pick them up and you'd get out of there as quick as you could and if you had the opportunity to get on a boat and go somewhere else, you would,'" she said.

"We have to remember these people are not doing anything except trying to get away from terrible situations."

PNG Prime Minister Peter O'Neill said a delegation of Australian Government officials would visit Port Moresby next week to meet with PNG officials.

He said he had already spoken with Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull about complying with the Supreme Court decision.

"Australia understands the court decision and the meeting next week will consider options and processes required to move forward in an urgent manner as required by the Supreme Court ruling," Mr O'Neill said.

Labor's immigration spokesman Richard Marles described Omid's death as "an absolute tragedy".

Mr Marles said Mr Turnbull had to act quickly.

"It is clear that the Turnbull Government's policy, focused only on deterrence with no feasible pathway to permanent migration in a resettlement country is leaving people desperate and without hope," he said.

"Mr Turnbull must urgently seek a viable agreement to resolve the fate of people on Manus Island and Nauru."

Greens immigration spokeswoman Sarah Hanson-Young directed comments on social media towards Mr Turnbull, tweeting "yes Prime Minister I am misty-eyed as I can only imagine his loved ones are too".

<http://www.abc.net.au/news/2016-04-29/brisbane-rally-protesters-demand-better-refugee-treatment/7372172>

26. Hundreds protest in Melbourne against offshore detention of asylum seekers

ABC News Online

By Jessica Longbottom, staff

First posted Sat 30 Apr 2016, 1:43pm

Updated Sat 30 Apr 2016, 1:49pm

Hundreds of people have gathered in Melbourne's CBD to protest against the offshore detention of asylum seekers.

The rally came days after Papua New Guinea's Supreme Court ruled Australia's detention of asylum seekers on Manus Island was illegal.

Federal Greens leader Richard di Natale told the crowd of about 400 people at the State Library of Victoria that Australia needed to do more to help the asylum seekers detained offshore.

"We are better than this," he said.

"We are not just turning our backs on innocent people — many of them tortured, some of them raped, [or who have] seen their families killed."

Iranian asylum seekers Saeed, 37, and Max, 31, attended the rally to pay their respects to their friend Omid, who died this week after setting himself on fire at the Nauru detention centre.

The pair got to know Omid while they were detainees on Nauru in 2013.

"Omid was a very quiet man, a very good man," Saeed said.

"I'm very sad for Omid's family and wife, my friends in Manus and Nauru. There are a lot of good people on Nauru and Manus — they are human, you know?"

Saeed now lives in community detention, while Max is on a bridging visa.

Max said he and his wife had been shattered by the news.

"We came here because of him and [murdered asylum seeker] Reza Barati. Too many people ... live on Nauru and Manus and they are too upset," he said.

"Please bring them here."

Future of offshore processing unclear

Following the PNG Supreme Court's decision, detainees on Manus Island were allowed to move between the centre's internal compounds on Thursday night.

However, their ability to move freely, and their permission to use mobile phones, was later revoked.

There is still no timeframe for the centre's closure, and PNG Immigration authorities said they were still seeking legal advice about how to proceed.

Both the Coalition and Labor have reiterated their support for offshore processing in recent days.

Spanish company Ferrovial is poised to takeover Broadspectrum, the Australian company which operates regional processing centres on Nauru and Manus Island, after acquiring more than 59 per cent of its shares.

In a statement today, Ferrovial indicated it would not continue running detention activities.

"Ferrovial's view is that this activity will not form part of its services offering in the future," the statement said.

The Department of Immigration and Border Protection said Broadspectrum's contract would expire on February 28 next year.

"The Department is aware of the intended takeover of Broadspectrum by Ferrovial," it said in a statement.

"The Department expects Broadspectrum will continue to meet its contractual obligations."

<http://www.abc.net.au/news/2016-04-30/hundreds-protest-in-melbourne-against-offshore-detention/7373094>

27. Nauru Refugee Omid Dies From Burns, As Two Reportedly Arrested For Suicide Attempts

Josh Butler

Huffington Post

Posted 29/04/2016 13:17 AEST

Updated 29/04/2016 14:27 AEST

UPDATE 2.20PM: The Department of Immigration and Border Protection has confirmed Iranian refugee who set himself on fire on Nauru on Wednesday has died.

"A 23-year-old Iranian man who set himself on fire in Nauru has tragically died today from his injuries. Appropriate support is being provided to his wife and friends," stated a press release from the department.

"The man was taken to Republic of Nauru Hospital for medical treatment by the Nauruan authorities. He was then transferred to Australia by air ambulance for medical treatment. The man passed away this afternoon in a Brisbane Hospital."

"The Department expresses its sympathies to his wife, family and friends. The death will be reported to the Queensland Coroner. No further comment will be made at this time."

EARLIER: The 23-year-old man, identified as Omid in some media reports, was flown off Nauru on Thursday and taken to Brisbane hospital accompanied by his wife.

Dutton on Friday defended the amount of time it took to get the man off the tiny Pacific Island, where Australia houses asylum seekers as part of its offshore detention policy.

"I'm advised [Omid's] condition is still critical and I don't have any further advice beyond that but he's not in a good way at all," Dutton told reporters in Sydney on Friday.

"This is not a plane sitting on the runway at Nauru... It's a contracted arrangement where you need an air ambulance so you can provide stability and assistance to the patient in flight and obviously all of that was put in place to contract those services and the decision, as I say, was made very quickly once the condition of the patient was understood and the medical assistance was provided," he said.

Refugee advocates say at least five others attempted suicide around the same time, with reports emerging on Friday that two people had been arrested for attempting suicide, a crime on Nauru.

Dutton on Friday said reports of the arrests were a matter for the Nauru government.

Earlier this month, a refugee on Nauru was convicted and fined for attempting suicide in January.

The Huffington Post Australia has contacted a spokesperson for the Nauruan government for comment.

On Wednesday afternoon Dutton said that "the plan is to provide an airlift for [Omid] later tonight"; but as HuffPost Australia reported on Thursday, it took almost 24 hours for the plane to arrive.

A Careflight jet flew Omid to the burns unit of the Royal Brisbane Hospital.

HuffPost Australia contacted the Brisbane hospital on Friday but a spokeswoman said she was not able to provide any information on the case, and referred enquiries to the Department of Immigration and Border Protection.

The ABC reported it took several hours for Careflight operators to stabilise Omid once the jet arrived on the island.

A candlelight vigil was held outside the Brisbane hospital on Thursday night.

Anglican priest Father Nicholas Whereat told the ABC he wanted to show their support for the injured man.

"We feel deeply saddened that anyone would get to the point where they would consider doing such a thing, let alone actually going ahead and doing it," he said.

"We're here to be with this man and to support him and to hopefully let him know that at this time he's not alone and there are people in Australia that do care about him as a human being."

Community action group Get Up has organised snap protests outside Department of Immigration offices and in public spaces around the country on Friday, in support of the 'Bring Them Here' campaign calling for asylum seekers and refugees in offshore detention to be brought to Australia.

http://www.huffingtonpost.com.au/2016/04/28/omid-nauru-refugee-fire_n_9802366.html

28. More attempted suicides in Australia's Nauru camp

Radio New Zealand
1:15 pm on 27 April 2016

Five asylum seekers detained on Nauru have attempted suicide in the past 24 hours as the United Nations' refugee agency visits the island, the Australian Refugee Action Coalition says.

The Coalition said four people drank washing powder last night following 38 days of protest at the family camp for detainees.

It said this morning, an Iranian man was badly burned after he attempted to self-immolate in front of UN representatives at Nibok camp.

All five people are now being cared for at the hospital on Nauru.

No one from the office of United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees in Canberra was available to comment.

The Coalition's spokesperson Ian Rintoul said there were also fears for two Iranian women Marziyeh Faghih (28) and Amineh Shajira (34) who have been missing from Nauru since Sunday.

"The family has been beside themselves they've pleaded with the police they've pleaded with case officers but no proper search has been mounted."

Mr Rintoul said family members of the missing women said the pair had talked previously about taking a boat and sailing themselves off the island.

Meanwhile, three asylum seekers have been forcibly removed from a Brisbane detention facility known as BITA.

Mr Rintoul said the three people had been brought to Australia from Nauru to receive medical attention.

"People inside BITA this morning saw the people being carried out, two of them being bodily carried out of the detention centre by guards dressed in black. It does look like they've put them on a plane to send them back to Nauru."

Yesterday, the Supreme Court in Papua New Guinea ruled the detention of asylum seekers on Manus Island is illegal.

"It looks like the Australian government has responded to their defeat in the Supreme Court in PNG by resorting to brute force and sending those people back to Nauru," Mr Rintoul said.

<http://www.radionz.co.nz/international/pacific-news/302466/more-attempted-suicides-in-australia's-nauru-camp>

29. Australia ignored its own medical experts' pleas to bring Nauru rape victim here

The Age
April 28, 2016 - 5:39PM
Bianca Hall

Australia ignored urgent pleas from its own medical experts to bring a refugee raped on Nauru to Australia for an abortion.

The Federal Court is considering the case of a young African woman, known only by the pseudonym S99, who was in the midst of a violent epilepsy seizure and barely conscious when she was raped on Nauru. Abortion is illegal in the tiny island nation.

The woman told the court on Thursday that she had realised she had been raped only when she discovered blood and "male discharge" on her person.

As Fairfax Media revealed last month, the woman's legal battles began when she begged Australian officials on Nauru to let her come here to terminate the pregnancy she does not want. Instead, Australia sent her to Port Moresby for an abortion.

Abortion is also illegal in Papua New Guinea, according to its criminal code, which states a woman who attempts to "procure her own miscarriage" faces a maximum seven years' imprisonment. Last year a PNG couple were jailed for five years for causing the death of their unborn child.

On Thursday, it was revealed the Department of Immigration and Border Protection ignored repeated requests from IHMS, the company it contracts to provide health services on Nauru and Manus Island, to bring the woman to Australia for an urgent termination.

In a letter to the department, IHMS warned that the woman faced long-term health and psychological consequences if she was forced to endure a pregnancy she did not want.

It also said the woman's epilepsy and another health condition, which Fairfax is prevented from disclosing due to a non-publication order imposed on Thursday, posed grave risks to her physical and mental health.

"The mental health risks are greater the longer the pregnancy progresses against her will," the report said.

The report said the woman was at risk of "significant mental health issues" both in pregnancy and afterwards, and that if her pregnancy was not terminated, she risked developing post-natal depression and not engaging properly with her baby.

But in a letter sent on Tuesday, David Nockels, the first assistant secretary of the detention services division of the Australian Border Force, rejected that advice. He remained of the view the Pacific International Hospital in PNG was an appropriate place for the woman to undergo her abortion.

Appearing via videolink from Port Moresby, where she remains in limbo after an emergency court order was imposed preventing an abortion being carried out until the current case is resolved, the woman told the court through an interpreter that she had not known she was being sent to PNG.

She said she signed a document she did not understand, or read, only after being told she would be taken to a third country for mental health treatment, dental treatment (for teeth broken during an earlier seizure), treatment for her seizures and to have her pregnancy terminated: "to get my health back".

Asked whether she knew where she was being taken, she said: "no".

The case continues on Friday.

<http://www.theage.com.au/national/australia-ignored-its-own-medical-experts-pleas-to-bring-nauru-rape-victim-here-20160428-goh30z.html>

30. Australia sent refugees to PNG for abortions knowing it was illegal, court hears

The Age
April 29, 2016 - 1:49PM
Bianca Hall

The advice was clear: "IHMS is not to concern itself with the legality of the procedure".

The advice to the International Health and Medical Services, the organisation Australia has charged with overseeing health services on Nauru and Manus Island, came from the Australian government.

Despite abortion being illegal under Papua New Guinea's criminal code, Australia has sent at least two refugee women for pregnancy terminations at Pacific International Hospital in Port Moresby, it was revealed on Friday.

This, high-profile barrister Ron Merkel told the Federal Court, was tantamount to Australia "procuring illegal conduct" in PNG.

The practice is part of the Australian government's determination that IMAs (irregular maritime arrivals, or people who arrived by boat in Australia and were instead sent to Manus Island or Nauru) not set foot on Australian soil, a senior bureaucrat told the court.

The Federal Court in Melbourne is currently considering the case of a young African woman, known only by the pseudonym S99, who was in the midst of a violent epilepsy seizure and barely conscious when she was raped on Nauru. Abortion is illegal in the tiny island nation.

As Fairfax Media revealed last month, the woman's legal battles began when she begged Australian officials on Nauru to let her come here to terminate the pregnancy she does not want. Instead, Australia sent her to Port Moresby for an abortion, where she remains in limbo.

Abortion is also illegal in Papua New Guinea, according to its criminal code, which states a woman who attempts to "procure her own miscarriage" faces a maximum seven years' imprisonment. Last year a PNG couple were jailed for five years for causing the death of their unborn child.

The woman, who is now more than 12 weeks' pregnant, can no longer have a medical termination and must instead have a surgical procedure.

IHMS officials have repeatedly raised serious concerns about the woman's care, given her frequent seizures, complications arising from an earlier medical procedure, and her serious mental health problems.

In a letter to the department, IHMS warned that the woman faced long-term health and psychological consequences if she was forced to endure a pregnancy she did not want.

"The mental health risks are greater the longer the pregnancy progresses against her will," the report said.

The senior bureaucrat charged with approving her transfer out of Nauru, David Nockels, had to consider her case on his first day as assistant secretary of Australian Border Force's detention services division.

Mr Nockels told the court he did not seek any independent legal advice on the advisability of sending S99 to PNG for her termination.

Instead, he sought the advice of Dr Mathias Sapuri, a senior consultant, and obstetrician and gynaecologist at PIH hospital, who is also a shareholder of the hospital.

"I would assume he would have an appreciation of that [legal situation]," Mr Nockels said.

The court was told Mr Nockels also decided to send S99 to PNG against the "urgent" medical advice of senior health officials on Nauru, who said she required specialist treatment because of complications arising from an earlier medical procedure, and her suspected epilepsy. Mr Nockels said he did not discuss those concerns with Dr Sapuri.

PIH hospital, the court was told, does not have EEG (which measure brain activity) or neurological services that would normally be required for patients with epilepsy undergoing surgical procedures.

Under sustained questioning from Mr Merkel, Mr Nockels agreed that he did not seek advice, apart from a phone call, about sending S99 to Australia or another country in the region with specialised health services.

"From a policy perspective in terms of bringing people back to Australia if there are other alternatives...we would pursue that," he said.

"That's why we have Nauru and Manus...that's the policy perspective."

Current policy is to transfer refugees and asylum seekers to Australia for medical treatment only in exceptional circumstances, Mr Nockels said.

He did not believe S99's case was an exceptional one.

<http://www.theage.com.au/federal-politics/political-news/australia-sent-refugees-png-for-abortions-knowing-it-was-illegal-court-hears-20160429-9oi2om.html>

31. Nauru rape victim's health not 'exceptional' enough to fly to Australia for abortion, court told

Senior border protection official says despite advice from five medical experts, he stood by his judgment that she could be treated in Papua New Guinea

The Guardian
Melissa Davey
Friday 29 April 2016 17.09 AEST

The serious neurological, physiological and psychological conditions of an African refugee who became pregnant after being raped on Nauru were not exceptional enough to warrant her being brought to Australia for medical treatment, a senior official within the Department of Immigration and Border Protection has told the federal court.

IHMS, the company contracted by the Australian government to provide medical services to asylum seekers in offshore processing centres, wrote to the official, David Nockels, to say the woman required an urgent abortion.

The serious neurological, physiological and psychological conditions of an African refugee who became pregnant after being raped on Nauru were not exceptional enough to warrant her being brought to Australia for medical treatment, a senior official within the Department of Immigration and Border Protection has told the federal court.

IHMS, the company contracted by the Australian government to provide medical services to asylum seekers in offshore processing centres, wrote to the official, David Nockels, to say the woman required an urgent abortion.

Five separate medical experts, including neurologists, psychiatrists and general practitioners, advised the government that because the procedure would carry extra complications due to her medical conditions, the procedure should be carried out in Australia.

The government was also advised that it was illegal to have an abortion in Papua New Guinea, with penalties of up to seven years in prison, and that Pacific International hospital and Port Moresby did not have the medical equipment to diagnose her suspected epilepsy, which specialists said would be essential to obtain before subjecting her to surgery.

There was no neurological unit at the hospital should she require monitoring due to complications, the government was advised, and psychiatric support was also inadequate.

The woman, identified only as S99, had been raped after falling unconscious as the result of one of her seizures, and woke to find blood and male discharge on her clothes. This and her subsequent pregnancy had left her with severe post traumatic stress disorder, the advice from IHMS experts said.

Although a medical abortion was initially recommended, a scan revealed her pregnancy was too far along and surgery was the only option.

Nockels told Justice Mordecai Bromberg in his evidence on Friday that the government had a policy not to bring asylum seekers to Australia, even for medical treatment, unless the circumstances were exceptional.

“That’s why we have Nauru and Manus,” Nockels said.

On 26 April, Nockels refused the request from S99 to transfer her to Australia for treatment, saying that a phone call to an obstetrician at the Pacific International hospital, Dr Mathias Sapuri, who had no expertise in neurology, psychiatry or PNG law, had reassured him that the abortion could be carried out in Port Moresby.

In his evidence, Sapuri admitted he had a financial interest in the Pacific International hospital as a shareholder, and that his private obstetric practice merged with the hospital. He did not say what proportion of the shares he held, other than it was “small”.

Ron Merkel QC, representing S99, asked Nockels why he valued the opinion of one doctor with an interest in attracting patients to the hospital over the advice of multiple medical experts provided by IHMS and lawyers representing S99.

“Would you agree maybe you should have thought this is an exceptional case?” Merkel said.

Nockels said that on reconsideration, aspects of s99’s case were “broadly exceptional” but that he stood by his judgment not to bring her to Australia for an abortion.

“I’m confident with his [Supari’s] assurance to me that it was a procedure he could do,” Nockels said.

Nockels did not seek internal legal advice about whether s99 would be exposed to criminal consequences for undergoing an abortion in PNG, but the court heard that advice from the government to IHMS was for IHMS not to concern itself with the legality of the procedure.

Nockels said he did not ask about whether S99 could have been flown to New Zealand or Singapore for the procedure, which have hospitals with the required medical specialists and equipment to treat and monitor S99’s other medical conditions. He did also not discuss her case with the surgeon general of border force, the court heard.

Another option Nockels said he would consider before approving a patient to fly to Australia would be to fly the required experts and medical equipment to the patient.

Merkel replied: “You would fly one EEG unit, an experienced neurologist, a psychiatrist an anaesthetist, as well as the considerable expertise required before and after the operation ... you could fly that whole team over to PNG because this is not an exceptional case?”

“That would be an option,” Nockels said.

Nockels had the authority to change his mind at any time about his decision and fly S99 to Australia for treatment, the court heard.

S99 is in Port Moresby, after signing a form giving consent to the procedure there. However, her lawyers told the court that S99 had not given informed consent, had not understood the forms she was signing, and had been told only that she would be flown to a third country.

An emergency court order was issued upon her arrival in Papua New Guinea to halt the abortion being performed.

Merkel told Nockels: “I’m not criticising you. You’re not the prime minister or immigration minister. But you understood the [government] policy to be to send her anywhere else other than Australia”.

“Correct,” Nockels said.

Bromberg is sitting late on Friday in order to get through all of the evidence so that, given the urgency of the situation, he can fast track his decision.

His decision may come as early as next week, though the government can still change its mind before then.

<http://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/apr/29/nauru-victims-health-not-exceptional-enough-to-fly-to-australia-for-abortion-court-told>

32. MEDIA RELEASE: Noose tightens on Manus: "Not Manus, Not Nauru", Mr Dutton!

Thursday April 28, 2016
Refugee Action Coalition
Ian Rintoul
mobile 0417 275 713

Further legal action, in the PNG Supreme Court, on behalf of hundreds of detainees presently on Manus Island is scheduled for Monday 2 May.

The action to enforce the constitutional rights of the asylum seekers sent to Manus by the Australian government will seek more explicit orders from the court for the release and return to Australia, of those asylum seekers and refugees.

The proceedings will also seek orders in relation to all aspects of the breach of their human rights endured since 2013, and will seek compensation for those human rights breaches.

The Australian and PNG government have not just breached the constitutional right to personal liberty, but have also denied them the protection of law (in regard to access to legal representation and the courts); freedom from torture and inhuman conduct; their right to be treated with humanity and 'with respect for the dignity of the person'.

Regardless of any future arrangement between the Australian government and PNG, all the asylum seekers and refugees presently in Papua New Guinea are covered by the present Supreme Court general ruling and are specifically covered by the case brought by Ben Lomai, scheduled for next Monday. There is no appeal from the Supreme Court ruling.

"It is shocking that Opposition Immigration spokesperson, Richard Marles, is demanding any continuation of offshore detention in Papua New Guinea. The Labor Party should take the opportunity to admit it's been a terrible mistake and to drop its offshore policy," said Ian Rintoul, spokesperson for the Refugee Action Coalition.

"Not only have people been detained for almost three years, they have suffered appalling human rights abuses over that time for which government Ministers and corporations must be held to account.

"The Manus people must be brought to the mainland. After three years of torture, the hell of Christmas Island is no alternative to the hell of Manus Island.

"The talk of sending them to Nauru is just wishful thinking by Peter Dutton. Besides being unseemly, such a move would be politically impossible. Nauru is in meltdown. And public opinion is running against the idea. The Let Them Stay movement has already won majority opinion for those from Nauru and Manus to be able to stay in Australia."

"Dutton is ducking and diving, but in the end, there is only one alternative -- to close Manus and Nauru; and bring all the refugees and asylum seekers to Australia. The Manus detainees in detention in Australian mainland detention centres should be set free immediately."

The Refugee Action Coalition has called a protest calling on the government to "Bring Them Here" : at Sydney Immigration offices, 12.30 pm, Friday 29 April, Lee St, City (near Railway Square).

Speakers will include: Jim Casey, Greens candidate for Grayndler; Nicole Judge, former Manus workers, Danielle Austin, Mums for Refugees and former nurse on Christmas Island.

For more information contact Ian Rintoul 0417 275 713