

# Project SafeCom News and Updates

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# 1. Descendants of Chinese miners walk in footsteps of discriminated diggers

ABC News Online

By Margaret Burin

Posted Fri 16 Sep 2016, 1:08pm

As Pauline Hanson enters Parliament, relatives of Chinese gold rush miners are conducting a long walk to honour their ancestors' determination in the face of discrimination, and remember a long history of xenophobia.

Max Brady may be a true blue Aussie bloke from Toowoomba, but he is "happy as Larry" with his Chinese heritage that for many years was an avoided topic among his family.

"It wasn't a hidden secret but it was not encouraged within Australia to talk about these sorts of things, being Anglo-orientated and possibly a little xenophobic," he said.

Mr Brady's great grandfather Wong Ah Sat came to Australia during the gold rush.

In 1857 — the year he arrived — the Victorian Government introduced a 10 pound tax for every Chinese person that entered a Victorian port.

The large fee was designed to stem the flow of Chinese migrants.

It meant almost 20,000 determined men like Sat entered the country via Robe in South Australia, and began a more than 400-kilometre journey on foot to places like Ballarat and Bendigo.

"It's just the way it is and still is, as recent events keep reminding us, there's elements of fear," Mr Brady said.

"It wouldn't have been a picnic."

Like many of the Chinese miners, Sat went on to become an integral part of Australian society.

He married Amelia Hackney, a woman from a well-to-do English family, and owned stores in the Bathurst and Bolong areas in country NSW.

## ***Chinese contributions celebrated***

Mr Brady has driven down to Victoria this week to take part in an 83km walk from Parliament House in Melbourne to Ballarat, in honour of his great grandfather.

The walk is part of the Chinese Fortunes exhibition, a series of events run by the Museum of Australian Democracy (MADE) to celebrate the contribution Chinese people have made to Australia over the past 165 years.

MADE ambassador Jane Smith said it was still a relatively hidden history.

"They knew how to use water, they grew food, one of the eminent historians said to me possibly without the Chinese, the Europeans would not have actually survived," she said.

"There are amazing things that the Chinese did, and in the face of a degree of adversity with the sort of discrimination they suffered."

Mr Brady said with more recent events such as Pauline Hanson's maiden speech in the Australian Senate, the walk is a timely reminder of discrimination in Australia.

"I think the 10 pound tax issue probably needs to be aired again if only to tell us that things don't change," he said.

<http://www.abc.net.au/news/2016-09-16/gold-miners-descendents-walk-to-remember-discrimination/7852528>

# 2. Anonymous Opinion: How I did a 180 on Nauru

ABC The Drum - Opinion

By Anonymous

Posted Thu 15 Sep 2016, 7:31am

I remember watching John Howard's fierce "We will decide who comes to our country and the manner in which they come" speech and being proud.

I voted Liberal; we had a strong leader who wasn't going to let queue-jumpers come in to our country and who wasn't afraid to tell the world.

I didn't know why they were coming and frankly didn't care. It wasn't about that, it was about setting rules for our country that others should and would follow.

The first time I went to Nauru the regional processing centre had been shut down, and most of the local Nauruans I spoke to were happy about it. They missed the income but they certainly didn't miss the Australian media's portrayal of their country as nothing but bird shit.

They hated the Australian media and I felt ashamed that we as foreigners could so openly slam another country without understanding their culture, their history and their sovereignty.

Nauru was not a bustling place; you could drive halfway around the country and not pass another car.

There was no public transport, no tourism and a sense of lethargy. The local government office forgot to pick me up from the airport. The hotel had dog shit in the foyer that no one picked up all day. This was a country that had been so beaten, so defeated; they simply stopped caring about themselves.

### ***Boom time for Nauru***

A year later I returned and couldn't hire a car on the island or book a hotel room – the place was booming.

Employment was high; the population had exploded with foreign workers, including many former miners from Australia happy to have a job after their industry slow down – and the beginnings of a secret society had developed. The processing centre had reopened.

All of a sudden you couldn't drive freely around the island, you had to be careful whom you spoke to and you must not, ever, question the government.

The foreign workers spoke about the asylum seekers as though they were highly educated terrorists sent to infiltrate Australia and take over the country.

"They're smart these ones – not like the ones in Howard's day. They speak English and know their rights," one camp worker told me in disgust at the time.

Nauruan people agreed: the asylum seekers were different to the last lot, they said.

"They stand up to you so you have to smack them down," I was told.

I saw asylum seeker children playing on the beach with Save the Children staff. My first thought was:

"See? They don't have it so bad. They're not locked up; it's all a big con."

I returned to Australia still sleeping soundly at night knowing my government was keeping me safe. But the image of the burly miners-cum-security guards kept playing on my mind.

Apart from that one glimpse of half a dozen kids on the beach with a couple of Save the Children workers, I hadn't seen a foreign female on the island.

Every night at dinner, each of the handful of restaurants was full of those burly workers and I realised - from the comfort of my own home - how intimidating the atmosphere had become.

### ***'We are not welcome here'***

A year later I was back in Nauru and keen to try a new restaurant on the island, opened by Pakistani refugees. We had a great meal and I got talking to the owners, expecting them to be happy and friendly. They weren't.

"I suppose you want us to tell you we're happy and grateful to be allowed out?" said one of them.

"Well I can't tell you that, because when you leave here those men across the street will throw rocks at us and tell us to go home.

"We are not welcome here and we have no hope for a future."

The Pakistanis told me they fled their homeland after the Taliban killed most of their families – their mothers, their brothers, and their school friends.

As the last surviving sons, money was pooled to escape, to start afresh and have a chance at life.

"I arrived on Christmas Island the day after the government announced I would never get asylum in Australia. I didn't know the people I was travelling with – none of us did, but we all had the same story – what was left of our families wanted to keep us alive."

Immigration Minister Peter Dutton had been in Nauru in February 2015, the week before I returned; a whistle-stop visit where, the refugees claimed, he dined at The Bay Restaurant and flew out again without speaking to any of them (the Nauruan government has reportedly said he and his Nauruan counterpart did visit a refugee resettlement facility).

The refugees began a peaceful protest, holding signs with their mouths covered shut. Some of them stopped going to work. They told me it was not because they were lazy, but because they genuinely feared for their safety.

A Somalian woman told me no one would offer her a lift on the island, rather the Nauruans spat at her as they drove past. I would witness this the very next day – a different woman, but the same treatment.

### ***No-one to turn to***

And then I met Hussain, a young Pakistani refugee who had the saddest eyes I have ever seen. I'm sure he would be handsome, but he has seen so much horror in his short 22 years, his faced was lined, his eyes black.

Hussain hadn't slept properly in years; he still had nightmares about his mother being murdered by the Taliban. He left Pakistan at his father's insistence, to find a better, safer life and make his mother proud.

He's been in Nauru for three years now. The processing centre was, he says, horrific – but still better than living in fear in Pakistan. Once his claim for asylum was processed he found a job in Nauru and got to work on rebuilding his life.

But then he was assaulted by work colleagues, apparently for 'doing a good job and working too hard'.

He joined the protest the next day, saying he could no longer tolerate living where he was not welcomed, with no hope for a future.

I drove past the protest and all hell had broken loose.

A Nauruan immigration officer had allegedly assaulted one of Hussain's friends\*. I drove him to hospital – his chin looked broken and there was blood everywhere.

Later that day I dropped Hussain and his friend back to their camp just outside the processing centre. The men all lived in containers and shared a common room with a couch, cooking equipment and a TV. It wasn't bad and they agreed they were lucky with their accommodation.

"Much better than the tents," they said.

Men walked in to the common room, embarrassed to see me there – a few rushed off and changed before returning to greet me. They thought I was there to help. All of them told me their stories, each one more horrific than the previous.

Stories of children killed, wives raped, siblings shot, businesses bombed and the worst: friends and family simply disappearing. They were from Iran, Iraq, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Somalia, Sri Lanka and other countries I'd never even heard of.

They were desperate to start living, working and send for their families. None of them had abandoned their families, none of them were terrorists. All had been declared refugees by the Australian Government, yet they continued to be punished for escaping brutality.

I left Nauru deeply ashamed of myself. How could I not care about these people?

How could I so blindly ignore their pleas for help and how could I naively think our policy of refusing refuge to those so desperately in need was anything to be proud of?

I kept in touch with Hussain and his friends, even met some of their families in Australia. I read anything and everything I could on Islam to make sure I hadn't been fooled in to feeling sorry for would-be terrorists.

I had many late night phone calls and messages from them, some suicidal, some just lonely. After Save the Children was kicked out in October last year, the refugees had no one to turn to.

### ***We simply don't care***

Recently I returned to Nauru. The island is still booming, but this time there were many refugees and asylum seekers walking freely around the island.

Many are employed; some have started their own businesses.

Hussain and his friends have accepted their fate – what they know of it.

But they told me what saddens them most is their chances of having their own family – a family theirs fought so hard to guarantee by sending them on a boat to Australia – is now even less likely.

They should be working, dating, travelling, doing what other 23-year-olds are doing. Instead, they're living in a country that doesn't want them, but is happy to be paid to keep them.

A couple of weeks ago I got another late night message from Nauru. Two more asylum seekers had overdosed and no-one apparently cared.

They are not doing it to attract attention, because they know they're not going to get it. We simply don't care.

They're queue-jumpers; by their actions on this issue, John Howard told us. Kevin Rudd told us. Julia Gillard told us. Tony Abbott and Bill Shorten told us.

But none of them have looked these refugees in the eyes and seen their horror. None of them have put those lives ahead of their own political gain and I am ashamed of all of them.

I have no doubt that in years to come we'll admit our policy was cruel, be ashamed of our actions and put it down to 'that's how it was in those days'.

But it wasn't, it isn't. It's just that most of us didn't bother to care to know the difference.

---->>>> *The writer of this piece works for a private company and is not affiliated with any political party or NGO.*

\*the Nauruan and Australian governments did not respond to a request for comment on the allegation that the man who carried out the assault was a Nauruan immigration officer.

<http://www.abc.net.au/news/2016-09-15/how-i-did-a-180-on-nauru/7815860>

### **3. The peculiar torture of Christmas Island's asylum seekers locked up with hardened criminals**

Michael Gordon  
Canberra Times  
September 17 2016 - 12:15AM

Amir never had a birth certificate, or a passport, or anything else that provided proof of who he was until he was released from immigration detention and passed the test for a probationary driver's licence in an outer eastern suburb of Melbourne.

"He'd never had a document in his life, so it was a very big moment," says Pamela Curr, an advocate who has been visiting asylum seekers in Melbourne detention centres since their numbers began to spiral back in 1999.

Soon after receiving the licence, Amir (not his real name) made a mistake. He was caught running a red light, 10kph above the speed limit, without the licence in his pocket. As well as losing the licence, he was fined \$1200 he did not have at Ringwood Magistrates Court.

Had he been an Australian resident, this would have been the end of it. He would have been given time to pay the fine and a salutary lesson. But Amir, an Iranian house painter who arrived on a boat in 2010, quickly found himself back in detention.

First he was held in Melbourne, then in Darwin and, for the past 11 months, he has been on Christmas Island, having fallen foul of a character test that is applied at the discretion of Immigration Minister Peter Dutton.

Slated for closure at the end of next year, Christmas Island hosts Australia's forgotten detention centre, a huge grey maze of concrete and steel, security doors and cameras, ringed by a an imposing new wire fence since a mentally disturbed refugee, Fazel Chegeni, escaped and died last November.

Fewer than 30 asylum seekers are held there, but they are sprinkled among a detainee population of about 200 that includes those Dutton has accurately dubbed "some of the country's most hardened criminals".

While debate about Australia's border protection regime has focused on the plight of those in limbo on Manus Island and Nauru, the situation of many of those on Christmas Island is more troubling in two respects: the asylum seekers are terrified of their fellow detainees and this is happening on Australian soil.

So says Curr, who travelled the 5000 kilometres from Melbourne to Christmas Island last month with Sister Brigid Arthur, who has run the Brigidine Asylum Seekers Project in Melbourne since 2001. "What we witnessed was a group of men utterly without hope, almost all of them broken human beings," she tells Fairfax Media.

The difference between those on Christmas Island and those on Manus and Nauru is that they reside in a high-security prison where three or four asylum seekers are placed in 50-person compounds with criminals who, they say, boast about the crimes they committed on the mainland, including armed robbery and rape.

"Some were shaking and clearly unwell, others were cowed and scared," says Curr. "But they all had the same request: 'Please get me out of here!'"

Next week the Prime Minister will attend the United Nations general assembly's refugee summit in New York, which has been billed as "a historic opportunity" to come up with a blueprint for a better international response to the world's biggest refugee crisis since World War II.

FULL STORY AT <http://www.canberratimes.com.au/federal-politics/political-news/australias-forgotten-detention-centre-the-peculiar-torture-of-christmas-islands-asylum-seekers-locked-up-with-hardened-criminals-20160916-grhix7.html>

## **4. Karen Middleton: Transfield's \$1.1b offshore processing contract farce**

A blistering audit of the offshore detention program reveals a system defined by untendered contracts and preferential deals raises billions of dollars' worth of questions.

The Saturday Paper  
Sep 17, 2016  
Karen Middleton

On Friday, August 24, 2012, the acting immigration department secretary, Martin Bowles, received an apparently unsolicited email. It came from industrial service provider Transfield Services. Breezy in tone, its purpose was business.

"It has been a while since we have spoken," its author wrote. "How is it going in the world of the Department of Immigration? I am sure it is very busy to say the least."

At the time, the department was scrambling to carry out an urgent instruction from Julia Gillard's government to reopen mothballed detention centres on Nauru and Papua New Guinea's Manus Island in an attempt to stop asylum seekers arriving by boat.

Transfield saw an opportunity. "Reason for contact," the email said, "is to enquire how Transfield Services can support you in your task in Nauru."

The email is revealed in a blistering report from the Australian National Audit Office tabled in parliament this week, which details how the department broke procurement rules repeatedly in its tender processes for running offshore processing centres.

The report finds taxpayer costs increased while the department said it was saving money. It shows the department failed to perform due diligence or collect necessary conflict of interest declarations; that it set aside other companies' bids in favour of Transfield without explanation or a proper paper trail, in one case declining to renew an existing contract; and based its decisions on information that other departments showed later was untrue.

After a series of contracts involving four organisations and spanning three years and as many governments, the proposed extension in 2015 to Transfield's contract to manage the Nauru and Manus Island centres was cancelled suddenly on July 29, midway through the audit office investigation. Unlike two previous tenders also investigated, this one had followed an open process. But concerns were raised that, after Transfield had been named preferred tenderer and other bidders dispatched, details were still being negotiated that led to the company upping its price without competition – by a billion dollars.

"During the course of negotiations, the department amended its requirements and accepted amendments and adjustments to services that flowed through to a \$1.1 billion increase in Transfield's overall price," the audit report found.

Instead, and despite the company, now renamed as Broadspectrum, wishing to get out of the detention centre business, the department exercised its right to extend the existing contract until October 2017. By then, the department intends to test the market and start all over again.

FULL STORY AT <https://www.thesaturdaypaper.com.au/news/immigration/2016/09/17/transfields-11b-offshore-processing-contract-farce/14740344003749>

## 5. Peter Dutton leaves door open to refugees on Nauru being resettled on New Zealand

ABC News Online

By political reporter Stephanie Anderson

Posted Thu 15 Sep 2016, 11:17am

Immigration Minister Peter Dutton has left the door open to refugees on Nauru being resettled in New Zealand.

The Australian Government has repeatedly talked down New Zealand as a third country option for refugees on Nauru and Papua New Guinea's Manus Island.

In 2013, New Zealand offered to take 150 people a year — an offer that is still on the table but has not been taken up.

Mr Dutton has told Al Jazeera it was a matter for Nauru and New Zealand.

He did, however, stress that no-one would be sent to Australia.

"We have had people smugglers that have tried to send boats across the top of Australia to New Zealand before," he said.

"Let me make this very important point that people — if they've sought to come by boat — it doesn't matter where they're resettled, New Zealand or somewhere else, they will not be coming to Australia at any point."

Mr Dutton has previously said he would be seeking Labor support to ensure that processed refugees who gained passports in their resettlement country would not be allowed to travel to Australia.

"There likely would be a change to some law that we would need Labor to support and we'll wait and see whether they do support that," he told 2GB last month.

"But I've made it clear that even if people are granted citizenship elsewhere, they're not then coming to Australia."

New Zealand Prime Minister John Key told reporters in February that the offer to resettle refugees remained open.

Speaking after meeting with Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull in Sydney, Mr Key said it was "potentially possible" for New Zealand to take refugees.

Mr Turnbull said Australia appreciated the offer, but that the Commonwealth remained "utterly committed" to not giving encouragement or "marketing opportunities" to people smugglers.

In June, Foreign Minister Julie Bishop said that New Zealand was not an "ideal" option.

"It would send a message to the people smuggling trade that you can get to New Zealand and then, presumably, to Australia," she said.

According to the latest statistics from the Department of Immigration and Border Protection, 411 people were counted as living in the Nauruan centre.

The statistics, dated July 31, included 49 children.

<http://www.abc.net.au/news/2016-09-15/dutton-leaves-door-open-for-refugee-resettlement-on-nz/7848088>

## 6. Peter Dutton open to refugees on Nauru being resettled in New Zealand

Immigration minister says any resettlement is up to Nauru and New Zealand, which contrasts with PM's claim such a move would encourage people smugglers

The Guardian

Katharine Murphy Political editor

Thursday 15 September 2016 16.27 AEST

Australia's immigration minister, Peter Dutton, appears to have left the door open to resettling refugees detained on Nauru in New Zealand.

In an interview with the al-Jazeera network, an excerpt of which has been broadcast by the ABC, Dutton referenced the potential for detainees to be sent to New Zealand as part of arguing that people currently in offshore immigration detention will not be allowed to come to Australia.

Dutton indicated he would have no objections if people were sent to New Zealand, arguing that any resettlement was an issue between Nauru and New Zealand.

After Dutton's comments were published in Australia, the New Zealand immigration minister, Michael Woodhouse, appeared to distance himself from Dutton's remarks. A statement from his office said New Zealand was not contemplating any separate discussion with Nauru.

"Our offer was made to Australia to take 150 offshore detainees, who have been approved as convention refugees. We are not considering entering into a separate arrangement directly with Nauru," said Woodhouse in a statement issued by his spokeswoman.

The comments from Dutton come before a speech he will make on Thursday night at the Australian Strategic Policy Institute in Canberra – and before his participation next week with the prime minister, Malcolm Turnbull, in a special summit on refugees that will be held in New York.

While the majority of the Coalition is perfectly comfortable with the situation on Nauru, the veteran Victorian backbencher Russell Broadbent recently broke ranks.

Broadbent said the government needed to consider whether there are adequate checks and balances to ensure the safety of people in immigration detention after the release of new records by Guardian Australia revealing the scale of abuse of children in offshore detention.

He said the incident reports published by Guardian Australia are "the sort of thing that brought John Howard to a place where he had to do something about it" – a reference to Howard softening the policy late in his term in government.

Broadbent is not alone in the government in having concerns about conditions that amount to indefinite detention in offshore immigration, but thus far he is the only MP to break ranks publicly.

With Turnbull and Dutton preparing to attend the United Nations-sponsored refugee summit next week, the prime minister made a studied tribute to his predecessor Tony Abbott in question time on Thursday – the final parliamentary sitting day in the week where Turnbull marked his first anniversary in the top job.

Turnbull noted Abbott, while prime minister, had galvanised "the strongest possible international response to the evolving threat of Daesh" – and had brought a strength of purpose "to the task of restoring the integrity of our borders."

The prime minister said his predecessor had ended the "disastrous" border policies of the Rudd and Gillard governments, that had "weakened our national security dramatically."

"Mr Speaker, under the policies of our government, and I acknowledge here the extraordinary contributions of leadership and determination of the members for Cook [Scott Morrison] and ably succeeded by the member for Dickson [Peter Dutton], we stopped the boats and we stopped the deaths at sea and that would never have happened had it not been for the election of the Abbott government in 2013," Turnbull said.

"Mr Speaker, regaining control of our borders enables us to have one of the most generous humanitarian programs in the world. We were only able to do that and maintain public support for it, because we control our borders."

In the interview with al-Jazeera Dutton emphatically rejects comparisons between the centres on Nauru and Manus Island, and Guantanamo Bay.

"I think it is an outrageous suggestion to be perfectly frank and I'd ask people to look at the facts as opposed to the emotion and some of the misinformation," the immigration minister says.

He also dismissed the concerns from refugee advocates and from whistleblowers about restrictions on information that can be disclosed from the centres.

Dutton said there was no "chilling effect" from government regulations. He said critics were trying to undo the government's policy.

"I think the agenda for many is to try to disrupt the program that we've got and to try to bring an end to the way in which we have enacted a very strong border protection policy. Now we're not going to be distracted by this misinformation," Dutton says.

"The point that I would make is that if somebody sees something that should be reported they've got an obligation to report it."

<https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2016/sep/15/peter-dutton-open-to-refugees-on-nauru-being-resettled-in-new-zealand>

## 7. Nauru relationship to 'continue for decades', Peter Dutton says

ABC News Online

By political reporter Stephanie Anderson

Posted Thu 15 Sep 2016, 3:54pm

Immigration Minister Peter Dutton says Australia's relationship with Nauru in relation to processing asylum seekers will "continue for decades".

In an address to the Australian Strategic Policy Institute, Mr Dutton said that regional processing had been a critical part of Australia's border protection policy.

He said centres had been maintained on Manus Island and Nauru, "in the face of sustained activist opposition".

"Our relationship in this regard with Nauru will continue for decades," he said.

His address comes almost one month after Papua New Guinea announced that it intended to close the Manus Island centre.

The ABC understands Australia will give PNG extra resources to cope with the transition, but Mr Dutton is yet to be drawn on how much.

He said the figure, when finalised, would be substantial.

The address — which coincides with a statement that New Zealand will not enter into any resettlement arrangement with Nauru directly — also listed updated figures on boat turn backs.

Mr Dutton said 740 people from 29 different boats had been intercepted and "returned safely" to their country of departure.

"People smugglers will not go quietly into the night," he said.

"They diligently follow the asylum seeker debate in this country, looking intently for any opportunity to restart what was a half billion dollar industry.

"Whatever decisions we make, we must always cast an eye to potential pull factors and the consequences that may follow."

### ***Increased visa cancellations make the community a 'safer place'***

Mr Dutton also spoke on the changes to section 501 of the Migration Act, which has seen hundreds of New Zealand citizens stripped of their visas.

The amended legislation increased the power given to Mr Dutton to revoke visas, primarily based on character grounds and whether they had spent more than 12 months in jail.

Mr Dutton said since it came into effect in December 2014, he had cancelled:

- 283 visas for offences of assault
- 265 for other violent offences
- 217 for drug offences
- 133 for child sexual offences
- 63 for rape
- 24 for murder
- 11 for manslaughter

Mr Dutton said he has also cancelled or refused the visas of 105 non-citizens known to be members of associates of outlaw motorcycle gangs.

"Who migrates to this country and the circumstances under which they do so has more than an economic impact," he said.

"It has an impact on Australian society and the way in which we live ... I have cancelled more visas on character grounds than any previous minister, and the community is a safer place as a result."

<http://www.abc.net.au/news/2016-09-15/dutton-says-nauru-relationship-to-'continue-for-decades'/7849604>

## 8. Asylum-seeker processing at Nauru will 'continue for decades', says Dutton

Immigration minister says 'spectre of people smuggling remains ever present' in speech interrupted by protesters calling for camps to be closed

The Guardian  
Katharine Murphy Political editor  
Thursday 15 September 2016 18.49 AEST

The immigration minister, Peter Dutton, has said Australia's regional processing relationship with Nauru will continue for "decades".

In a speech on Thursday night to a Canberra-based policy thinktank that was interrupted briefly by protesters shouting "close the camps", Dutton said regional processing had been critical to removing any incentive for people smugglers to undertake dangerous voyages in an attempt to reach Australian soil.

"In the face of sustained activist opposition, we have maintained regional processing centres on Manus Island and Nauru. Our relationship in this regard with Nauru will continue for decades," Dutton said.

"While the boats may have stopped, the spectre of people smuggling remains ever present in our region. We know that there are 14,000 people in Indonesia who would board a boat to Australia today if our border protection policies were weakened. And it would be just the start."

The minister referred to ongoing discussions with countries on resettlement options, but he suggested there would be no imminent breakthroughs. "Negotiations will be protracted," he said.

The speech also foreshadowed future reforms to the permanent skilled and family streams of the migration program.

Dutton will travel to New York with the prime minister next week to attend a United Nations-led summit on refugees, and in an interview with the al-Jazeera network foreshadowing the trip, the immigration minister appeared to hold open the prospect that asylum seekers could be settled in New Zealand.

Dutton indicated he would have no objections if people were sent to New Zealand, arguing that any resettlement was an issue between Nauru and New Zealand.

"We have had people smugglers that have tried to send boats across the top of Australia to New Zealand before," Dutton said.

"Let me make this very important point that people – if they've sought to come by boat – it doesn't matter where they're resettled, New Zealand or somewhere else, they will not be coming to Australia at any point."

The observation was a significant departure from previous government statements on this question. Since 2013, New Zealand has put a standing offer to Australia that it would take 150 people a year, but the Turnbull government has consistently shut the offer down, arguing it would give a green light to people smugglers.

After Dutton's comments to al-Jazeera were published in Australia, the New Zealand immigration minister issued a two-line statement saying New Zealand was not contemplating any separate discussion with Nauru over the resettlement offer.

In questions after his speech on Thursday night, Dutton said there was absolutely no change in the government's position on resettlement in New Zealand.

He said the question put to him on al-Jazeera referenced a deal that could be struck between Nauru and New Zealand, not an Australia-led negotiation. "There has been no change. Our position remains unchanged."

Dutton told the Australian Strategic Policy Institute the government had to hold the line on deterrence measures because people smugglers "will not go quietly into the night; they are ruthless and sophisticated criminals".

"They diligently follow the asylum seeker debate in this country, looking intently for any opportunity to restart what was a half-billion-dollar industry. Whatever decisions we make, we must always cast an eye to potential pull factors and the consequences that may follow."

Dutton acknowledged there had been what he termed "issues in our strained detention and processing networks" – but he repeated his regular criticism of refugee advocates.

"Our detractors do no service to anyone by trading in false hope and speaking in disingenuous terms. Their entreaties to a different approach offer nothing but a holiday from history and ignore the fundamental reality that secure borders require policies that are tough and fair."

“If they are not tough they will not be fair to those desperate people waiting in camps. And they will not be morally fair to those who will again be lured to the murky depths by the siren call of people smugglers.”

He also told his audience terrorist groups such as Daesh were “exploiting the mass movements of the international migrant crisis to move materials and personnel to support terrorism.”

“They are using chaos and volume as cover. Just two days ago three Syrian nationals who travelled through Turkey and Greece using fake passports were arrested in a series of pre-dawn terror raids in northern Germany,” Dutton said.

“The men were allegedly assisted by the same smuggler organisation behind the Paris attacks.”

During the period of questions Dutton was asked why John Howard could soften the “Pacific Solution” and bring people held offshore back to Australia in the mid 2000s – but the Turnbull government was resisting current entreaties to bring people out of what is proving to be indefinite detention.

The immigration minister suggested criminal syndicates lacked the capacity during the Howard years to communicate quickly with one another about political statements being made in Australia. “We have to learn the lessons of history but we have to have a contemporary view,” Dutton said.

The minister said the government was working “very very intensely with a number of partners” on third country resettlement – but complex resolutions to complex problems can’t be announced overnight.

<https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2016/sep/15/asylum-seeker-processing-at-nauru-will-continue-for-decades-says-dutton>

## **9. Peter Dutton's claim Nauru detention regime will last for decades attacked as 'ignorant'**

Human rights groups say plan out of step with global expectations and ignores asylum seekers' suffering

The Guardian

Paul Farrell

Friday 16 September 2016 14.02 AEST

The plans of Australia’s immigration minister, Peter Dutton, for a decades-long offshore detention relationship with Nauru are “woefully ignorant” of the reality of life on the island for asylum seekers, according to Human Rights Watch.

On Thursday Dutton told a Canberra thinktank that Australia’s regional processing relationship with Nauru would continue for “decades”.

He described Australia as a “migration super power” that had secure borders and also provided for people “in a humane way”.

The looming United Nations general assembly and a migration summit hosted by the US president, Barack Obama, had led to some speculation that Australia might soften its stance but those hopes were largely dashed on Thursday after Dutton’s address.

The Australia director of Human Rights Watch, Elaine Pearson, said Australia was known for its “cruel, selfish policies” to deter asylum seekers.

“Dutton’s claim that the relationship with Nauru on regional processing ‘will last for decades’ is woefully ignorant of the reality on the ground for refugees in Nauru,” she said. “People have been driven to the depths of despair as the high rates of self-harm and suicide attempts show, people have been attacked and assaulted by locals and many refugees on Nauru suffer serious health conditions that haven’t been properly treated.

“Nauru is no place for refugees short or long term. In any case, Nauru has not even agreed to allow people to stay longer than 10 years so it is hard to understand how the policy could last for decades.”

Amnesty International Australia’s refugee campaign co-ordinator Ming Yu Hah said the minister’s comments were “hugely misleading” of what the Australian people were increasingly demanding from the country’s asylum policies.

“He has framed it as activists that are opposing the detention regime on Nauru but, as we’ve seen in the last year alone, people across Australia ... a wide cross section are no longer tolerating the Australian government’s abusive offshore detention regime,” she said.

“We know that the Australian people expect thorough security measures in place and Amnesty supports that. But the Australian people also expect people will provide a robust human rights framework.”

She also said his comments were also “out of step at the global level” and Obama’s summit showed the need for greater and more humane responses to the movement of people across the globe.

The comments follow other remarks made by the president of the Australian Human Rights Commission on Thursday, before Dutton’s address. The commission launched a new report canvassing regional alternatives to Australia’s detention regime, which said Australia had reached an “impasse” on asylum seeker policy.

In a separate interview with al-Jazeera Dutton appeared to leave open the door to asylum seekers held on Nauru to being resettled in New Zealand.

The New Zealand foreign affairs minister quashed this, stating that the country would not enter into any separate deals with Nauru’s government directly to take refugees.

Iain Lees-Galloway, immigration spokesman for New Zealand’s opposition Labour party, said Australia’s detention centres were an “inhumane way of dealing with refugees” and that the party would be open to working with Australia on taking some refugees from Nauru.

However, he dismissed as “completely inappropriate” Dutton’s apparent desire to “take Australia out of the equation entirely”.

“These refugees are Australia’s responsibility. The decision to put them on Nauru was Australia’s. Australia has a role in their future and their settlement. It is quite inappropriate for Minister Dutton to say Australia will step back and leave New Zealand and Nauru to work it out,” he said.

The Guardian’s publication of the Nauru files has put the treatment and conditions of asylum seekers held on the Pacific island back into the spotlight. The 2,000 incident reports contained detailed allegations of the abuse of asylum seekers, particularly children held by Australia on Nauru.

A parliamentary inquiry has been launched into allegations of abuse of Manus Island and Nauru. The inquiry will also examine what steps Australia has taken to resettle refugees held in the offshore detention centres.

<https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2016/sep/16/peter-duttons-claim-nauru-detention-regime-will-last-for-decades-attacked-as-ignorant>

## **10. Peter Martin: The extraordinary cost of keeping asylum seekers in detention: over \$500,000 each**

Sydney Morning Herald  
September 14 2016 - 11:45PM  
Peter Martin

What if our government really wanted to save money? As well as going after \$6.7 billion in its omnibus savings bill, it could go after the billions more it costs to run our immigration detention centres: \$9.2 billion in the past three years, \$3.9 billion to \$5.5 billion in the next four, according to the most complete accounting yet of the costs normally hidden in inaccessible parts of the the budget.

It comes as an Audit Office report identifies the cost per offshore detainee: a gobsmacking \$573,100 per year.

For that price – \$1570 per day – we could put them up in a Hyatt and pay them the pension 15 times over.

It costs less than half that, \$200,000 a year, to house a typical onshore prisoner; a mere fraction of that, \$72,000 including super, to pay a typical full-time worker, and just \$20,700 a year to pay a full pensioner.

Ninety-nine per cent of the population don't come anywhere near \$573,100 a year in income or cost. The census stops asking when income sails past \$156,000.

But the comparison with wages isn't strictly valid. It understates the outrageousness of the \$573,100 price tag. The \$573,100 isn't being paid in return for a detainee's labour, in return for a contribution to society, as are wages. It is being paid to prevent the detainee contributing to society. It is what economists call a deadweight loss. We get nothing in return for it, apart from less of what we could have had.

And perhaps because it is not meant to make economic sense (and perhaps because the Department of Immigration and Border Protection has operated as something of a law unto itself), it hasn't even made financial sense.

The Audit Office says the department breached public service guidelines by not conducting proper tenders for the contracts to provide services to Manus Island and Nauru, at times falsely claiming it faced urgent and unforeseen circumstances.

"The available record does not indicate that urgent or unforeseen circumstances existed," the Audit Office says. "The record suggests that the department first selected the provider and then commenced a process to determine the exact nature, scope and price of the services to be delivered."

The department's approach to selecting one provider to service both centres from 2014 "removed competition from the outset". There is no record of staff completing conflict-of-interest declarations, no record of the checks that would have discovered that a director of one of the subcontractors had faced bribery charges and was later acquitted.

After being selected without a proper tender, the new provider extracted an extra \$1.1 billion from Australian taxpayers, which was agreed to without going back to the contractors who had just been sacked. The price per detainee shot up from \$201,000 to \$573,100.

Astonishingly, the report says the department didn't tell its minister at the time, Scott Morrison, that the deal required the Commonwealth to pay a "significant premium over and above the historical costs". Nor did it tell him the price per head.

The department was not only shielded from public accountability, it also managed to hide things from its minister.

UNICEF and Save the Children get the \$9.2 billion figure in their report *At What Cost?* from the numbers scattered around various parts of the official record. They say there are less specific other costs they haven't included, among them regular independent and senate inquiries, the defence of High Court challenges, and compensation for detention centre employees who have suffered as a result of what they have been exposed to.

Intriguingly, the cost of boat turnbacks, the part of the government's policy that has probably been the most effective in deterring asylum seekers, is tiny by comparison: just \$295 million over three years, compared with \$9.2 billion for continuing to hold asylum seekers in detention.

And there's a whole other set of costs, which *At What Cost* wrongly labels non-economic, hidden from the public by gag clauses: self-harm, suicide attempts and mental deterioration, especially among children. Economists would say they destroy human capital. Adam Smith, the father of modern economics, titled his magnum opus *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations* because he had discovered that that's what gave nations wealth – not gold or notes or coins, but human beings who could provide goods and services.

Deliberately or carelessly deprecating human capital is perhaps the worst crime against humanity. The Commonwealth Treasury thinks so. Chief among the goals in its wellbeing framework is giving people "substantive freedom to lead a life they have reason to value".

It has fallen to Malcolm Turnbull to end a system that has passed its use-by date. Even criminals aren't locked up indefinitely on the pretence that their cases are being "processed". The decision of Papua New Guinea to close the Manus Island detention centre makes a decision more urgent. On Friday he meets the president of the Human Rights Commission, Gillian Triggs, to discuss the way forward. She says we should move from deterrence to prevention. It would cost so much less.

<http://www.smh.com.au/comment/the-extraordinary-cost-of-keeping-asylum-seekers-in-detention-over-500000-each-20160914-grftcj.html>

## **11. Two-thirds of Australians want Nauru and Manus refugees to be resettled, poll shows**

Poll released by Save the Children shows 75% of Liberal voters think Malcolm Turnbull should accept New Zealand's resettlement offer

The Guardian  
Elle Hunt  
Wednesday 14 September 2016 10.14 AEST

Pressure is mounting on Malcolm Turnbull to end detention of refugees on Nauru and Manus Island, ahead of two summits at which world leaders will discuss the global crisis.

Save the Children released the results of a poll on Wednesday that show that two-thirds (66%) of Australians believe the prime minister should act urgently to resettle refugees held in offshore detention by the end of the year.

Three-quarters (75%) said Turnbull and Bill Shorten, the leader of the opposition, should work together to find a solution.

In the poll 77% of respondents, including 75% of Liberal party voters, said Turnbull should accept New Zealand's offer to resettle refugees, which he rejected in late April.

The poll of 1,010 voters nationwide was conducted by Galaxy Research on 6 and 7 September. Data from the survey was weighted by age, gender and region to reflect the latest population estimates.

Turnbull is under increasing pressure to end the stalemate over offshore detention amid criticism over the policy from within Australia and overseas.

Analysis by Save The Children with Unicef, released separately on Tuesday, found that offshore processing cost taxpayers at least \$3.6bn between 2013 and 2016. The total cost of Australia's policies was put in excess of \$9.6bn.

Tim Norton, head of campaigns at Save the Children, said Australia had to play its part in addressing the world's refugee crisis.

"The most urgent matter facing the government in this space is the fate of refugees and asylum seekers stuck in limbo on Nauru and Manus Island," he said. "The government continues to justify its treatment of these refugees by declaring they have the support of the Australian people. But these results show that just isn't true and Australians are demanding a better way."

Norton said two summits on the global refugee crisis that Turnbull will attend in New York later this month presented an opportunity for him to announce a way forward on the world stage.

The prime minister will attend the United Nations general assembly's summit on the movements of refugees and migrants on 19 September, billed by the UN as "an historic opportunity to come up with a blueprint for a better international response".

Turnbull will also be present at the Leaders' Summit on Refugees hosted by Barack Obama the following day, at which the US president will urge nations to increase refugee intake and humanitarian funding.

The prime minister has come under sustained criticism for Australia's detention facilities following the Guardian's publication of the Nauru files, more than 2,000 leaked incident reports that laid bare the devastating abuse and trauma inflicted on children held there.

Protests were held across Australia after their publication last month, with ongoing action planned. Love Makes a Way, a Christian advocacy group, is holding public readings of the Nauru files this week.

On Monday it was confirmed that Australia's parliament would launch an investigation into allegations of abuse, self-harm and neglect of asylum seekers on Manus and Nauru.

<https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2016/sep/14/two-thirds-believe-australia-should-resettle-refugees-in-detention-by-2017-poll>

## **12. UN human rights office calls on Australia to end offshore detention**

Chitralekha Massey, the new Pacific representative of the office says politicians must show courage and close Australian-run detention centres

The Guardian  
Paul Farrell  
Saturday 17 September 2016 07.59 AEST

Australia must show "political courage" and end the indefinite detention of asylum seekers held on Nauru, the new Pacific representative of the United Nation human rights office of the high commissioner has said.

In an interview with Guardian Australia Chitralekha Massey, spoke at length about Australia's offshore detention policies.

She said Australia's detention of asylum seekers on Nauru "is unsustainable, it's a violation and it's unnecessary". The continuing reports of abuse, self-harm and sexual assault had created an alarming environment at the centre that Massey said needed to be resolved.

The Guardian's publication of the Nauru files has put the treatment and conditions of asylum seekers held on the Pacific island back into the spotlight.

Massey said that the asylum seekers held on Nauru had to be given the opportunity to resettle in Australia or another country if they had been found to be refugees.

United Nations general assembly and a key migration summit hosted by the United States president, Barack Obama, will be held next week. The Australian prime minister, Malcolm Turnbull, and the immigration minister, Peter Dutton, will be both be in attendance.

Massey encouraged the Australian government to bring an end to the detention of men, woman and children on Nauru, where hundreds of asylum seekers languished in "not only prolonged, but indefinite" detention.

Massey's team completed an inspection of the Nauru centre in August 2015. She said the situation in the past two years had been "aggravated even further", based on the observations of her office's latest visit.

"We have repeatedly reported our concerns around healthcare, around education, access to justice," she said.

"We are particularly concerned about the sexual violence and the number of rapes against women, against children. The amount of self-harm that is really an indicator of how bad the mental health of people has deteriorated."

"It's difficult for me to find words to describe how somebody can go from being at a breaking point and just continue to be at a breaking point endlessly.

"There is an urgent response required."

In response to Dutton's comments that Australia's regional processing relationship with Nauru would continue for "decades" she said: "It's already unacceptable."

She urged Australia to adopt a "non-custodial" approach to migration and those seeking asylum: "There is a better way to do this."

"It's very important that the children on Nauru receive, with urgency, the chance for normal lives."

She said she looked favourably at the Australian Human Rights Commission's recent report Pathways to Protection, which canvassed a number of options to encourage a more humane and regional response from Australia.

She also noted that while the detention centre on Nauru moved to an "open centre" arrangement in October 2015, asylum seekers held on the island still lived in "militarised, police-like" arrangements. She also urged Australia to take up a greater regional role in bolstering the human rights framework of neighbouring Pacific countries.

The UN office continues to focus on other aspects of Australia's approach to human rights. Massey said the office remained concerned about the juvenile justice system, Indigenous affairs and gender-based violence in the community.

"We are very concerned that juvenile justice seems to be almost the norm rather than the exception," she said.

A royal commission is due to begin shortly into the Northern Territory's juvenile justice system.

<https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2016/sep/17/un-human-rights-office-calls-on-australia-to-end-offshore-detention>

### **13. Australia's refugee impasse: rights commission suggests ways forward**

Report suggests greater cooperation and 'harmonised regional systems' for processing asylum claims

The Guardian  
Paul Farrell and Melissa Davey  
Wednesday 14 September 2016 12.01 AEST

The Australian Human Rights Commission has released a "blueprint" canvassing a range of alternatives to Australia's offshore detention regime on Manus Island and Nauru amid an "impasse" over Australia's controversial policies.

The commission's report has been released in a turbulent period for the Australian government and its offshore detention regime. The Manus Island detention centre is set to close after an adverse ruling from Papua New Guinea's supreme court.

The Guardian's publication of the Nauru files has put the treatment and conditions of asylum seekers held on the remote Pacific island back into the spotlight. The 2,000 incident reports contained detailed accounts of the abuse of asylum seekers, particularly children held by Australia on Nauru.

In the report's introduction the commission's president, Gillian Triggs, says Australia's asylum seeker policy has now reached an impasse.

"The recent election of a new federal government provides an opportunity to consider alternatives to third-country processing that will both secure Australia's sovereign borders and provide refugees with protection consistently with their human rights," Triggs writes.

"Despite a largely bipartisan approach to third-country processing, Australia remains legally bound to ensure that its policies comply with international human rights law."

The report examines two distinct ways of expanding opportunities for safe entry to Australia and enhancing Australia's foreign policy strategies on migration in the Asia-Pacific region.

It suggests encouraging wider ratification of the refugee convention across the region, developing domestic asylum seeker legislation, and introducing “harmonised regional systems” for processing asylum claims.

“ ‘Singling out’ refugees and people seeking asylum as the sole focus of a foreign policy response, or attempting to address their needs in isolation, may not be an effective means of building protection capacity in the region,” it says.

It goes on to recommend the “strategic use” of resettlement to foster greater cooperation across the region.

“In the long term, strategic resettlement could assist in building a bridge to further cooperation (essential to developing more sustainable policy responses) by providing a tangible demonstration of Australia’s solidarity with countries hosting large numbers of refugees,” the report says.

It also encourages increased funding for non-governmental organisations.

Triggs said the report was intended to contribute positively to public debate on alternatives to processing of asylum seekers on Manus Island and Nauru.

“I am confident that, with informed and respectful discussion, Australia will rise to the challenge of a humane response to those who seek our protection from conflict and persecution,” she said.

Triggs launched the report on Wednesday, in the lead-up to the UN general assembly and a global migration summit hosted by the US president, Barack Obama.

This week the Australian Senate launched an investigation into allegations of abuse, self-harm and neglect of asylum seekers held in Australia’s care on Nauru and Manus Island.

Meanwhile, protesters from the Love Makes a Way Christian movement are holding a 10-hour protest outside the department of immigration in Melbourne, having set up speakers and a microphone to read from the Nauru case files continuously throughout the day.

A spokeswoman for the group, the Rev Alexandra Sangster, said there would be similar vigils held across the country throughout the week. “There’s over 14 hours worth of text in the Nauru files, and we’ll be reading out about 10 hours worth of that,” she told Guardian Australia.

“We’re doing it to bring to people’s attention the abuses which have been going on in our name and to call for an end to offshore detention. We also don’t think there’s any need for another inquiry. We know what’s going on. It’s been proven. Enough is enough.”

Cardboard cut-outs of children have been placed outside Parliament House in Canberra as humanitarian groups call on the government to release children from detention on Nauru.

Save the Children and Amnesty are ramping up pressure on the Turnbull government. They say Australia must immediately resettle about 250 children they claim are on Nauru or at risk of being sent back there, and drastically increase its humanitarian refugee intake.

“These children can’t be here,” Save the Children’s Tim Norton told reporters in Canberra on Wednesday. “We’re bringing their image right in front of politicians so they can’t ignore them anymore.”

<https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2016/sep/14/australias-refugee-impasse-rights-commission-suggests-ways-forward>

## **14. Bring them here: Gillian Triggs' plea to Malcolm Turnbull on asylum seekers**

Canberra Times

Michael Gordon

- with Henry Belot and Marcus Mannheim

September 14 2016 - 12:00AM

Gillian Triggs has urged Malcolm Turnbull to move quickly to bring asylum seekers who have been held on Nauru and Manus Island to Australia and embrace a suite of new policies to ensure the people smuggling trade does not resume.

The president of the Australian Human Rights Commission will meet the Prime Minister on Friday to press the case for a “rights-based” alternative to using offshore processing on Nauru and Manus Island to deter arrivals.

The commission will release its blueprint for change on Wednesday, proposing several new pathways for refugees to come to Australia, an increase in the resettlement program and a regional refugee protection framework.

"It's become very clear that what we have cannot be maintained and something has got to give. The purpose of this paper is to provide some ideas that would encourage that," Professor Triggs told Fairfax Media.

Many of the recommendations complement those in a separate report by UNICEF and Save the Children released on Tuesday that estimated the cost of Australia's border protection policy since 2013 at \$9.6 billion.

Both reports follow a call from Paris Aristotle, the pre-eminent adviser to both sides of politics on refugee issues over the past two decades, to act swiftly or face the "high likelihood" that "many more men and women will express their despair by attempting to harm and kill themselves". Mr Aristotle said Australia should be among the countries considered for resettling the refugees on Manus and Nauru and played down the potential for such a move to reignite the people smuggling trade.

While the commission's report does not address the plight of those who have been on Nauru and Manus for three years, Professor Triggs said: "Because no other solutions have been found, clearly those on Nauru and Manus must be brought to Australia."

"They've been held for years, many of them. It's indefinite detention with no solution and I see no other alternative at the moment to bringing them to Australia and integrating them."

Professor Triggs said the report Pathways to Protection: A human rights-based response to the flight of asylum seekers by sea, had been informed by discussions with senior government officials, international experts and months of research.

"I hope that this report presents some positive proposals to break the current policy deadlock; that Australia's policy response shifts from a deterrence-based to a rights-based approach that prioritises safety of life at sea and pathways to durable solutions," she says in the introduction to the report.

"The international response to Australia's policy of third country processing suggests that our reputation as a welcoming and rights-respecting nation is being eroded while we maintain this approach."

While the report does not address human rights issues raised by turning boats back and affording refugees only temporary protection, the report says its proposals "could also be considered as alternatives to these proposals".

Meanwhile, an audit has found the Immigration Department failed to rein in spending on Australia's overseas immigration detention centres, which cost taxpayers more than half a million dollars for each asylum seeker.

Auditor-General Grant Hehir's searing report shows officials could not explain how they selected the businesses that received more than \$3 billion to build and run the centres in Nauru and Papua New Guinea's Manus Island.

<http://www.canberratimes.com.au/federal-politics/political-news/bring-them-here-gillian-triggs-plea-to-malcolm-turnbull-on-asylum-seekers-20160913-grffrj.html>

## **15. Immigration detention cost blowout blamed on procurement failures**

Report finds 'serious and persistent deficiencies' in immigration department's management of contracts

The Guardian  
Calla Wahlquist

Tuesday 13 September 2016 18.53 AEST

The cost to taxpayers of running Australia's offshore detention centres was higher than necessary because the Department of Border Protection and Immigration failed to comply with the commonwealth procurement standards, a report by the Australian National Audit Office has found.

The report into the procurement of garrison support and welfare services for the offshore processing centres on Manus Island and Nauru, released on Tuesday, found the department had "fallen well short of effective procurement practice" in negotiating more than \$3bn worth of contracts for both centres since they were reopened in 2012.

It identified "serious and persistent deficiencies" in the department's management of the contracts, including "significant skill and capability gaps" among staff and "persistent shortcomings" in areas ranging from record keeping to the ability to assess value for money.

The immigration minister, Peter Dutton, said the report was "an independent expose of the absolute chaos and dysfunction at the heart of the Rudd-Gillard Labor governments in their handling of border security" and that "total responsibility for the problems and processes outlined in the report falls upon Labor".

However, the report reserved its strongest criticism for the handling of an open tender process that began under the Abbott government.

Asylum seekers began arriving at the reopened offshore processing centre in Nauru on 14 September 2012, three weeks after the Gillard government passed legislation to reopen camps on both Nauru and Manus Island under a deal that saw the Australian government bear the cost of establishing and running the centres.

Manus Island received its first arrivals on 21 November 2012.

The report said the contracts for garrison support – security, cleaning, and catering – and welfare services, which included education and recreation, were awarded under a limited tender process in August 2012 and again in 2013, when the department consolidated the contracts by making Transfield the principal contractor across both centres.

The initial contract with Transfield for garrison support at Nauru, which ran from September 2012 to March 2014, was worth \$351m. The current contract, for garrison support and welfare services at both Manus and Nauru until February 2017, is worth almost \$2.2bn.

The report said the department failed to demonstrate value for money in either of the initial limited tender processes or in the subsequent open tender process, which began in 2015 and was abandoned on 29 July 2016, after the department failed to assure a steering committee its renegotiated agreement with Transfield represented value for money.

“Procurement is core business for commonwealth entities and the deficiencies have resulted in higher than necessary expense for taxpayers and significant reputational risks for the Australian government and [the department],” it said.

The audit said the failures in the open tender process, conducted under the Abbott-Turnbull government, were of “most concern,” finding the department allowed Transfield to negotiate a \$1.1bn increase in the value of the contract without checking whether it had the authority to agree to that increase or whether other tenderers could best that price.

It said that was of particular concern because the department had been explicitly ordered to reduce the cost per head of running the centres.

According to figures provided by the department, the average cost per head declined from \$698,000 in 2012-13 to \$529,000 in 2015-2016 but, when you exclude capital expenditure from that calculation, the cost had actually gone up from \$427,000 to \$464,000.

In a statement on Tuesday, the department said its conduct “must be considered in the context of the unique operational environment [it] faced at the time”.

“The department met the requirement of the government of the day in an environment that was high-tempo and complicated by logistics and procurement activities in foreign countries,” it said.

“Delegates were required to make decisions on complex matters within very short timeframes. It remains the department’s position that decisions taken in this period were reasonable under the circumstances.”

The department said Australia’s immigration detention network was under “considerable strain” from the arrival of almost 7,000 asylum seekers by boat in the first seven months of 2012 and said it acknowledged that “decision-making processes in this complex and rapidly evolving environment were not adequately documented”.

The department said it accepted the audit office’s recommendations and had already begun to update its computer systems to allow for better record-keeping.

Dutton said the Coalition was “working steadfastly to clean up Labor’s monumental mess” and called on Labor to “acknowledge that its incompetent performance placed an impossible burden on the public service”, saying department and Australian Border Force staff deserved an apology from the opposition leader, Bill Shorten.

<https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2016/sep/13/immigration-detention-cost-blowout-blamed-on-procurement-failures>

## **16. Immigration Department criticised over handling of welfare, security services for offshore centres**

ABC News Online

By political reporter Stephanie Anderson

First posted Tue 13 Sep 2016, 2:02pm

Updated Tue 13 Sep 2016, 5:26pm

The Department of Immigration and Border Protection has been slammed for its handling of offshore detention centre contracts, some of which were entered into without prices being set first.

The report from the Australian National Audit Office (ANAO) detailed concerns over the contracting of welfare, security, catering and cleaning services, adding that the department accepted a Broadpectrum contract which had blown out by more than \$1 billion without seeking alternative quotes.

The report stated the department was unable to demonstrate it had secured value for money in three of the four hiring processes for centres on Nauru and Manus Island.

For example, the department did not require Transfield to provide a proposal specifying services to be delivered and a price when establishing the centres in 2012.

"As a result, it was very difficult for the department to demonstrate that it had conducted a robust value-for-money assessment which considered the financial and non-financial benefits of the proposal," the report stated.

The report went on to say prices were not settled until contracts with service providers were entered into.

When consolidating contracts for Nauru and Manus Island in 2013 and 2014, the bid for Manus Island exceeded historical costs by between \$200 million and \$300 million.

The report went on to state that due to falling numbers of asylum seekers being detained, the cost of said detention was more than double the estimated figure.

"The Prime Minister had requested that per-head costs be lower as a result of retendering the contracts, but the department did not calculate a per-person cost," it stated.

"Finance advised the ANAO that under the consolidated contract, the per-person-per-annum cost of holding a person in the offshore processing centres in Nauru and on Manus Island, was estimated at \$573,111, at the time of the Mid-Year Economic and Fiscal Outlook 2015-16. "Prior to consolidation, Finance estimated the cost at \$201,000."

### ***Dutton says 'total responsibility' lies with Labor***

Immigration Minister Peter Dutton blamed previous Labor governments for the mishandling detailed in the report.

In a statement, Mr Dutton said "total responsibility for the problems and processes outlined in the report falls upon Labor".

"Labor must acknowledge that its incompetent performance placed an impossible burden on the public service which was charged with reopening regional processing centres in Nauru and Papua New Guinea within a matter of weeks," he said.

However, the report did detail issues with the open tender process from 2014 to 2016, saying insufficient consideration was given to the use of benchmarking to determine overall value for money.

"The value of expanded services was estimated by an external adviser (KPMG) at between \$594 million to \$835 million above historical costs," it stated. "The Government had not provided policy authority to expand the services or increase the funding value of the contract to accommodate service enhancements or adjustments."

In a statement, the department said the report had to be considered in the context of the "unique operational environment" it faced at the time. The statement went on to outline the amount spent on the centres fell over the past four years, "from a peak in early 2012-13 of \$698,000 average per person down to \$529,000 per person in 2015-16".

"When capital expenditure is excluded, the average cost per head has been relatively stable, at between \$427,000 (2012-13) to \$464,000 (2015-16)," it added.

"Expenditure was consistent with the department's overall policy authority under Operation Sovereign Borders. Funding and appropriation levels were adjusted, in accordance with the cabinet-agreed processes, at the Commonwealth Budget updates over the period in question."

The department has agreed to both recommendations put forward in the report, which outlined the need to address skill and capability gaps among staff.

### ***Department's 'clearly gone rogue': McKim***

Greens Senator Nick McKim said he was "genuinely flabbergasted" at the report. Senator McKim, the Greens' new immigration spokesperson, said the department had acted in some circumstances without government authority.

"The Department of Immigration and Border Protection would have terrible trouble organising the efficient purchase of a beer in a brewery," he said.

<http://www.abc.net.au/news/2016-09-13/immigration-dept-criticised-by-audit-office-offshore-centres/7839902>

## 17. Missing documents, unskilled staff, poor value for money: Auditor-General lashes immigration detention

Canberra Times

September 13 2016 - 4:23PM

Henry Belot and Markus Mannheim

The Immigration Department failed to rein in spending on Australia's overseas immigration detention centres, which cost taxpayers more than half a million dollars a year for each asylum seeker, an audit has found.

Auditor-General Grant Hehir's searing report shows officials could not explain how they selected the businesses that received more than \$3 billion to build and run the centres in Nauru and Papua New Guinea's Manus Island.

The report, tabled in Parliament on Tuesday, examines how the department managed the contracts for security, cleaning, catering, health and welfare services for the centres.

It said the department fell "well short of effective procurement practice", and identified "serious and persistent deficiencies" in its efforts to build the centres in 2012 and then reduce costs over the next four years.

The audit noted "significant skill and capability gaps" at all levels of the department and poor planning, procurement and record-keeping. It also criticised the department's treatment of suppliers and failure to prove value for money.

The department failed to check whether the officials who awarded lucrative contracts to companies had any conflicts of interest.

Nor could it demonstrate why its contractors – including Transfield, the Salvation Army and Save the Children – provided value for money.

The department accepted all audit recommendations and admitted decision-making processes were not well documented.

In a 700-word statement, the department defended its record saying it worked in an urgent environment at a time when thousands of asylum seekers were arriving "illegally by boat".

"Australia's immigration detention network had been rapidly expanding and was under considerable strain: almost 7000 people were in immigration detention in Australia, of whom about 95 per cent were boat arrivals," the statement said.

"The department met the requirement of the government of the day in an environment that was high-tempo and complicated by logistics and procurement activities in foreign countries.

"Delegates were required to make decisions on complex matters within very short time frames. It remains the department's position that decisions taken in this period were reasonable under the circumstances."

The audit said the department's approach to contracting had defied a directive to reduce costs, saying it had "reduced competitive pressure and significantly increased the price of the services without government authority to do so."

In contrast, the department said its records show that average spending per detainee fell from \$698,000 in 2012-13 to \$529,000 per person last financial year.

Mr Hehir's report said higher than necessary expenses and poor procurement standards exposed the government to reputational risk.

<http://www.canberratimes.com.au/national/public-service/missing-documents-unskilled-staff-poor-value-for-money-auditorgeneral-lashes-immigration-detention-20160913-grfarr.html>

## 18. Peter Dutton defends Immigration Department in wake of damning audit report findings

ABC News Online

By political reporter Tom Iggulden

First posted Wed 14 Sep 2016, 1:07pm

Updated Wed 14 Sep 2016, 1:10pm

Immigration Minister Peter Dutton has defended his department's professionalism in the face of an auditor's report saying it broke procurement rules and lost important records.

The Australian National Audit Office report, issued yesterday, said it found evidence of "serious and persistent deficiencies" in the way the department hired and paid contractors \$3 billion to run the Manus Island and Nauru offshore detention centres.

The report covers the period under Labor when the camps were re-established, and under two further procurement phases handled by the current Government from 2013 onwards.

Mr Dutton told the ABC the department had done its best in difficult circumstances following high numbers of asylum boat arrivals under Labor.

"I'm not going to be critical of the department," he said.

The audit report catalogues "procurement skill and capability gaps among departmental personnel at all levels" resulting in "higher-than-necessary expense for taxpayers and significant reputational risks for the Australian Government".

The report catalogues a host of serious failings, including:

- Major contracts were awarded without costs being discussed and tenders were not subject to competitive tension
- Contracts were terminated without a record of why or how contractors were performing against agreed benchmarks
- No evidence could be found that either due diligence or conflict-of-interest processes had taken place before contracts were signed
- A Finance Department estimate of the per-head cost of housing asylum seekers of \$200,000 blew out to \$573,000 per head

Mr Dutton said any shortcomings were the result of the pressures placed on the system by Labor's time in government.

"They handled the situation as best they could and as professionally as possible," he said.

He also defended the department's decision to continue paying contractors for high numbers of detainees despite the fact asylum boat arrivals stopped during the Government's Operation Sovereign Borders.

"They do need that latent capacity, so they make professional judgements," he said.

### ***Immigration Department has become 'a rogue agency'***

Labor responded to the report by attacking government policy.

"This report further highlights Peter Dutton's complete failure to secure durable and credible third-country resettlement arrangements, [which] has led to cost blowout and crisis in offshore detention centres," a spokesman for shadow immigration minister Shayne Neumann said.

Further comment has been sought from Labor.

The Greens said the report was an indictment on both major parties and the Immigration Department.

"It's become a rogue agency and both Labor and the Coalition have got an awful lot to answer for in terms of presiding over a massive waste of taxpayer money," Greens immigration spokesman Nick McKim told PM.

<http://www.abc.net.au/news/2016-09-14/peter-dutton-defends-immigration-department-in-wake-of-audit/7844534>

## **19. Senate to investigate allegations of child abuse on Nauru and Manus Island**

Labor's push for inquiry passes Senate with backing of Derryn Hinch, Jacqui Lambie and the Nick Xenophon Team

The Guardian  
Paul Farrell  
Monday 12 September 2016 18.44 AEST

Australia's parliament will launch an investigation into allegations of abuse, self-harm and neglect of asylum seekers held in Australia's care on Nauru and Manus Island.

The Guardian's publication of the Nauru files renewed attention on Australia's offshore detention regime, particularly the Nauru detention centre.

The contents of the incident reports has drawn heavy domestic and international criticism and renewed pressure on Malcolm Turnbull's government to end close to three years of detention of asylum seekers and refugees on Nauru and Manus Island.

Labor initiated a push for a Senate inquiry following the release of the files. The motion was co-sponsored by the Greens and received the backing of the crossbench senators Derryn Hinch, Jacqui Lambie and the Nick Xenophon Team to pass the Senate on Monday.

The initial terms of the inquiry, which focused on Nauru, have been expanded to also encompass allegations of abuse and neglect at the Manus Island detention centre in Papua New Guinea.

It will investigate responses to abuse and assault allegations by the Australian government and its private contractors, as well as the steps the government has taken to negotiate resettlement options with third countries. Labor's proposal for an independent children's advocate to monitor the welfare of children in detention will also be a specific focus.

The inquiry will also examine the effect of a new criminal offence in the Australian Border Force Act that could see detention staff jailed for up to two years for speaking out about what they have seen inside the detention system.

The shadow immigration minister, Shayne Neumann, said the government had "failed to establish durable, third-country resettlement arrangements".

"The Nauru files represents the largest leak of documents detailing the reporting of and responses to allegations of mistreatment of individuals residing in offshore detention centres and, like many Australians, Labor was concerned by the contents of those reports," he said.

"Labor has made clear our commitment to offshore processing and regional resettlement, combined with the policy of turning back boats to ensure people smugglers are denied their trade in exploiting vulnerable people. We have also made clear our view that we have a special obligation to ensure those vulnerable people are not subjected to any further harm or violence.

"As representatives, we have a responsibility to investigate serious claims about any mistreatment of asylum seekers in offshore processing centre."

The Greens' immigration spokesman, Nick McKim, said: "We need to reveal the truth.

"There have been horrendous allegations of assaults, sexual abuse and ... [allegations of ] widespread cover-ups at high levels.

"The government's only responses have been denial, dismissiveness and disinterest ... We need to close the camps and bring the people there to Australia."

The inquiry is due to report by March 2017.

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Full terms of the Senate inquiry into Australia's offshore detention centres

The following matters be referred to the legal and constitutional affairs references committee for inquiry and report by the last sitting day in March 2017:

– The serious allegations of abuse, self-harm and neglect of asylum seekers in relation to the Nauru regional processing centre and any like allegations in relation to the Manus regional processing centre, with particular reference to:

- (a) the factors that have contributed to the abuse and self-harm alleged to have occurred,
- (b) how notifications of abuse and self-harm are investigated,
- (c) the obligations of the Commonwealth government and contractors relating to the treatment of asylum seekers, including the provision of support, capability and capacity building to local Nauruan authorities,
- (d) the provision of support services for asylum seekers who have been alleged or been found to have been subject to abuse, neglect or self-harm in the centres or within the community while residing in Nauru,
- (e) the role an independent children's advocate could play in ensuring the rights and interests of unaccompanied minors are protected,
- (f) the effect of part 6 of the Australian Border Force Act 2015,
- (g) attempts by the Commonwealth government to negotiate third-country resettlement of asylum seekers and refugees,

(h) additional measures that could be implemented to expedite third-country resettlement of asylum seekers and refugees within the centres, and

(i) any other related matters; and

2. The committee be granted access to all inquiry submissions and documents of the preceding committee relating to its inquiry into the conditions and treatment of asylum seekers and refugees at the regional processing centres in the Republic of Nauru and Papua New Guinea.

<https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2016/sep/12/senate-to-investigate-allegations-of-child-abuse-on-nauru-and-manus-island>

## 20. Senate inquiry to examine abuse allegations after Nauru files leaked

ABC News Online

By political reporter Stephanie Anderson

Posted Mon 12 Sep 2016, 6:34pm

Allegations of abuse and self-harm in Australia's offshore immigration detention centres will be the subject of a senate inquiry after a motion was passed in the Upper House today.

Labor and the Greens co-sponsored the motion, which was passed 35 to 27 with the help of crossbench senators Nick Xenophon, Skye Kakoschke-Moore, Derryn Hinch and Jacqui Lambie.

The move comes after thousands of leaked files alleging abuse of children and adults in Nauru's processing centre were published last month.

The more than 2,000 incident reports published by The Guardian outlined various allegations of abuse, including assaults, sexual assaults and self-harm between 2013 and 2015.

The Legal and Constitutional Affairs References Committee inquiry will examine "serious allegations of abuse, self-harm and neglect of asylum seekers" at both the Nauru and Manus Island regional processing centres, including the obligations of the Australian Government and contractors.

It will also examine attempts by the Commonwealth Government to negotiate third-country resettlement of asylum seekers and refugees.

Shadow immigration minister Shayne Neumann said Parliament had "a responsibility to investigate serious claims about any mistreatment of asylum seekers in offshore processing centres". In a joint statement with Senator Murray Watt, Mr Neumann emphasised the potential role of an independent children's advocate. "Unaccompanied minors are some of the most vulnerable asylum seekers," he said.

"The inquiry will be asked to specifically give consideration to the role an independent children's advocate could play in protecting the rights and interests of unaccompanied minors."

Greens' immigration spokesperson Nick McKim said that Parliament needed to "reveal the truth" of what happened at the centres.

### ***'Public has a right to know what goes on'***

The establishment of the senate inquiry follows a meeting between Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull and Nauruan President Barn Waqa, whose Government has blocked two Australian politicians from entering the island nation.

Most recently, crossbench MP Andrew Wilkie was denied a visa after planning to travel to Nauru to visit the processing centre. Mr Wilkie said the public had "a right to know what goes on" in the centre and took aim at the Turnbull Government for not supporting his attempted trip.

In addition to the leaked files, a separate report detailing the allegedly inhumane treatment of refugees held on Nauru was released by Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch.

Titled Australia: Appalling abuse, neglect of refugees on Nauru, the joint report detailed concerns about mental health, access to adequate medical care, attacks from the local Nauruan population, and concerns for the education and health of children on the island.

The Immigration Department denied many of the claims, stating it was not consulted about the report.

<http://www.abc.net.au/news/2016-09-12/senate-inquiry-to-examine-abuse-claims-after-nauru-files-leaked/7837162>

## 21. Paris Aristotle says Nauru files claims 'should not be diminished'

Immigration adviser says asylum seekers' uncertain futures are contributing to the risk of self-harm and suicide

The Guardian  
Melissa Davey  
Wednesday 14 September 2016 15.12 AEST

A leading government immigration adviser has said all claims of assault experienced by asylum seekers in Australian-run detention centres should be investigated thoroughly and has no doubts many of the allegations are valid.

Paris Aristotle's comments follow an article in the Australian on Wednesday that claimed Aristotle had warned people to be wary about believing asylum seeker claims of assault.

The article was based on an interview with Aristotle led by the Sky News political commentator Chris Kenny on Monday, in which Aristotle was questioned about Guardian Australia's publishing of the Nauru files.

The Nauru files are the largest set of leaked documents published from inside Australia's immigration detention system written by guards, caseworkers and teachers on Nauru, many of which contain reports of self-harm, sexual assaults, child abuse, hunger strikes, assaults and injuries.

The Australian reported that Aristotle warned during the Sky interview "that claims that were invalid, embellished or misunderstood risked insulting the people of Nauru and inflaming tensions among refugees on the island".

While Aristotle also told Sky he did not believe abuse was occurring every day, he also said: "The sort of entrenched warfare that takes place [around the issue] can sometimes distort the information that is presented from all sides. My plea around this is that we climb out of our trenches and appreciate there are no straightforward answers to this."

He added that "I think people would have coped much better if, one, they weren't in detention and, two, they knew always that there was a process once having been found to be a refugee that was going to lead to them being able to get on with their lives in a country that is safe and secure".

Aristotle said that, in absence of hope for their futures, "what we're seeing now is spiralling rates of depression and, in my view, serious risks of people self-harming, permanent psychological harm and greater risk of suicide".

Aristotle told Guardian Australia on Wednesday that "I wouldn't want to dispute that many claims of assault are serious and valid".

"Even if some claims have been embellished, I am sure that enough of them are true and serious enough to give cause for concern, and the seriousness of those claims should not be diminished," he said.

He said the assault claims brought to light through the reporting of the Nauru files were "serious and with enough validity to warrant deep and through investigation".

But he added: "This debate has become so adversarial and conflict-based that it's unsurprising some claims are embellished or exaggerated as a part of that.

"Regardless of whatever position people hold at present, the urgent reality is people need to be resettled as a matter of priority to safe places where they can get on with their lives."

Aristotle has also called for greater access to offshore detention centres for the media, which he said would assist in accurate reporting and allow journalists to more easily verify claims.

<https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2016/sep/14/paris-aristotle-says-nauru-files-claims-should-not-be-diminished>

## 22. Australia has spent \$9.6bn on asylum seeker policy in four years, says report

Unicef and Save the Children say Australia's policy of deterrence is expensive, diplomatically damaging and simply pushes displaced people to other countries

The Guardian  
Helen Davidson  
Tuesday 13 September 2016 06.30 AEST

Australia has spent \$9.6bn in just four years on its asylum seeker policy – the majority on its offshore and mainland detention centres – according to a new report from Unicef and Save the Children.

The organisations found the current policy was expensive and unsustainable in its financial, human, and diplomatic costs. It noted Australia's expensive policies of deterrence simply pushed the growing number of displaced persons elsewhere, and caused damage to its international reputation and strategic ability to hold influence with other countries.

Analysing government data and expenditure, the report *At What Cost?* found taxpayers would likely spend a further \$5.7bn over the next four years if nothing changed, and children transferred to Manus and Nauru would continue to suffer mental health problems, abuse and neglect.

The Papua New Guinea supreme court in April found the Manus Island centre illegal and unconstitutional and ordered its closure but hundreds of men remain inside.

Last month the Guardian published more than 2,000 leaked documents detailing widespread mental trauma and abuse in the Nauru facility.

In the report released on Tuesday, Unicef and Save the Children called for the government to urgently reinvest the money to create a strong regional framework to support asylum seekers, which incentivised "orderly migration" and undermined the business model of people smugglers.

Nicole Breeze, Unicef's director of policy and advocacy, said the \$9.6bn included at least \$3.6bn on offshore processing, at least \$5.6bn on onshore mandatory detention, and at least \$295m on naval interceptions and boat turnbacks. The remaining \$112m was spent on other programs including the widely criticised Cambodia agreement and other efforts to find a third-party resettlement option.

The costs were based on the estimated 32,000 men, women and children in the asylum seeker processing system.

"The current system is unsustainable," Breeze told Guardian Australia. "It's extremely expensive, it's causing grave harm, it's complicated and it's opaque and difficult to assess its efficacy, cost and value for money."

Breeze said it was difficult to identify expenditures and attribute them because the total suite of "policies of deterrence" was spread across multiple agencies and lacked full transparency.

"I think we do have a particular issue here, and it's one of the areas that organisations such as ourselves have been really encouraging government to increase their disclosure of information," she said.

The report said the true cost was likely to be much greater than the \$9.6bn, once the costs of the government maintaining and defending its policy in courts and parliamentary inquiries and of workplace compensation incidents were factored in.

"In combination, the opacity of the true human and economic costs of Australia's policies mean that Australia's taxpayers and voters are being asked to judge the merits of a policy response, without having all the facts on the table," it said.

The human cost of Australia's immigration policy, particularly the mental and physical harm to those held in detention, had been widely reported and subject to at least 10 inquiries, but there was very little known about what happened to people who were turned back, the report found.

The head of Operation Sovereign Borders, Major General Andrew Bottrell, argued in court last month that Australia's policy of turning back boats at sea must be kept secret to protect the security of the commonwealth, because the information otherwise helped "educate ... potentially illegal immigrants".

Tuesday's report cited estimates of as many as 7,000 children "trapped in transit" in Indonesia alone, "unable to access safe pathways to protection".

"These children face the risk ongoing danger, persecution, discrimination and other serious harms and challenges while remaining in their home countries or countries of first asylum or transit," said the report.

"The narrative in Australia often ends with that three-word- slogan around stopping the boats," Breeze said. "But we've found there is very little information about what people are in fact being turned back to.

"We have growing concern around the situation and the safety of people who have been returned back to their place of origin or where their journeys commenced."

Unicef and Save the Children called for the government to "pivot its policy framework away from bilateralism and towards the establishment of a durable regional solution".

The report made nine recommendations for the Australian government.

It said the government should immediately:

- Publicly affirm its commitment to the UN refugee convention

- Publicly commit to a timeline of resettlement for those on Nauru and Manus Island in an “appropriate” third country
- Legislate against detaining children and find alternatives
- Normalise resettlement processes with Indonesia, including revoking the ban on resettling refugees who arrived there after July 2014
- Commit to fiscal transparency on the policy costs and hold a full audit

And within three years:

- Increase the humanitarian intake to a flexible 30,000
- Support the establishment of a regional refugee protection framework in south-east Asia
- Phase out boat turnbacks and reinvest offshore detention funding the search and rescue operations
- Improve access to non-humanitarian migration options for asylum seekers

“This report is building a case for serious investment in a regional refugee protection framework as a much more proactive policy measure than what we’ve got,” Breeze said.

<https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2016/sep/13/australia-has-spent-96bn-on-asylum-seeker-policy-in-four-years-says-report>

## 23. Offshore detention cost Australia \$10b in three years, international aid groups find

ABC News Online

By Matt Watson

Posted Tue 13 Sep 2016, 4:17am

The Federal Government has spent almost \$10 billion on offshore processing and mandatory detention since 2013, according to a report by aid organisations Save the Children and Unicef.

The report, released today, estimates the Government will spend almost \$6 billion on offshore processing and mandatory detention over the next five years.

Australia runs two offshore processing facilities, on Nauru and on Manus Island, off the coast of Papua New Guinea.

Almost 3,000 people remain in detention in those facilities, but the PNG Government recently ruled the Manus Island centre was unconstitutional and ordered its closure.

Immigration Minister Peter Dutton said last month both countries would work towards the centre's closure "as quickly as possible".

Today's aid agencies report draws on data from documents produced by the Government and aid organisations, including the Australian Human Rights Commission's Forgotten Children Report (2014), the Philip Moss Review and this year's joint Human Rights Watch/Amnesty International Report.

Save the Children CEO Paul Ronalds said it demonstrated how Australia's border policies had been hurting the national economy.

"That's got to change — we need a system that is effective and there are policy alternatives to the current extremely expensive and highly ineffective system."

Mr Ronalds said the Federal Government could easily develop policies that were humane, cost-effective and did not damage Australia's international human rights reputation.

"It costs about \$400,000 to keep a person on either Manus or Nauru, that's per annum," he said.

Mr Ronalds said the Government could spend that money on humanitarian aid in Jordan, Lebanon or Indonesia, where asylum seekers could live safely.

"Give them a quality of education, a quality of health that would take away any incentive to take on these dangerous journeys over land and through seas. That's a much better way to spend the money.

"With that sort of money, \$9.6 billion, Australia can afford to invest in those places around the world which are source countries for large numbers of refugees."

Mr Ronalds said successive federal governments had shown an utter lack of political imagination.

"We've been told that you have to be in favour of people dying at sea or you have to be in favour of the current set of policies," he said.

"What this report clearly shows is that is not true."

'A blemish on Australia's character'

Mr Ronalds said no-one wanted to see children or families dying at sea, and that the best way to address the problem was to remove incentives for people to buy passages on old boats.

"Australia should increase its humanitarian intake up to at least 30,000 people per annum. It is less per capita that we were doing in the 1970s," he said.

"Given the unprecedented nature of the global migration crisis that we face, it is just the sort of thing that Australia should do to be pulling its own weight."

Mr Ronalds said many Australians believed mandatory detention was cruel and that the Government should change its policies.

"A couple of weeks ago, Save the Children released polling in Malcolm Turnbull's own electorate that said the vast majority of people in his electorate wanted the Government to resolve the status of people living in Manus and on Nauru," he said.

"We are seeing real momentum for change. It is not fair and it's not right, it's a blemish on Australia's character to have people languishing offshore."

A spokesman for Mr Dutton said the Federal Government had stopped the boats, closed 17 detention centres and, most importantly, ended deaths at sea.

"The Government remains committed to our policies of turn-backs where it is safe to do so, regional processing and temporary protection visas," the spokesman said.

"The Government has been clear that those who arrive by boat will never be settled in Australia."

<http://www.abc.net.au/news/2016-09-13/offshore-detention-cost-australia-10-billion-in-three-years/7837388>

## **24. Revealed: the cost of stopping the boats put at \$9.6 billion**

Canberra Times

Michael Gordon

September 13 2016 - 12:00AM

The cost of stopping the boats has been calculated at more than \$9.6 billion since 2013, and will be another \$5.7 billion over the next four years, according to a study by Save the Children and UNICEF.

The study estimates the cost of keeping around 2000 asylum seekers and refugees on Manus Island and Nauru at \$400,000 per person, compared with just \$33,000 for those on bridging visas in the Australian community.

It asserts the policy is inflicting incalculable harm on asylum seekers, especially children; straining bilateral relationships; and damaging Australia's bid for a seat on the United Nation's Human Rights Council.

It calls on the Turnbull Government to commit to a timeline for resettling those on Nauru and Manus Island, legislate against the detention of children and revoke the ban on resettling refugees who arrived in Indonesia after July 1 2014.

Pressing the case for a regional protection framework, it also recommends an increase in Australia's refugee intake and the phasing out of turning back boats to Indonesia, which is says exposes asylum seekers to potential danger at sea and further harm.

With a report to be launched by the Human Rights Commission on Wednesday, the study increases the pressure on Malcolm Turnbull to end the ordeal of those in limbo. Mr Turnbull will fly to New York next week to attend a summit called by President Obama on refugees.

"The Prime Minister should use this moment to redirect Australia's approach to refugees and asylum seekers and embrace greater regional cooperation and provide protection for some of the world's most vulnerable children," says Save the Children Australia chief executive, Paul Ronalds.

Immigration Minister Peter Dutton has ruled out any softening of Australia's policy, telling Parliament on Monday: "We will not deviate because the people smugglers are still there in Indonesia, and in Sri Lanka and Vietnam and elsewhere trying to put syndicates together to put people on to boats."

Called *At What Cost?*, the 80-page report represents the most comprehensive attempt to reveal the cost of Australia's hardline policy on boat arrivals, drawing on publicly-available data on the costs of maintaining offshore and onshore detention centres, boat turn-backs and the failed Cambodian resettlement agreement.

Report authors Lisa Button and Shane Evans concede the lack of transparency in reporting and aggregated budget allocations make it difficult to accurately cost Australia's asylum seeker framework, but assert the "true economic cost" is likely to be much greater than the \$9.6 billion.

They says their estimate excludes the costs of inquiries by the Parliament and the Human Rights Commission into Australia's detention system, of defending numerous legal challenges in the courts and of paying compensation to those who have suffered damage.

"The Turnbull Government has endlessly trumpeted its immigration policies, but at the same time sought to hide their true costs through secrecy laws which criminalise whistleblowers who disclose human rights violations, protocols of operational secrecy and a refusal to establish adequate independent monitoring mechanisms," says Mr Ronalds.

The report concludes that, if Australia's approach was adopted on a global scale, it "would certainly mean the end of the notion of refugee protection".

"Our policies attempt to coerce those fleeing persecution to stay where they are, to wait indefinitely and to endure countless dangers, indignities and lives lived in limbo," the report concludes.

"What's more, Australia's current deterrence policies set a dangerous precedent which, if replicated elsewhere, will increasingly result in tides of men, women and children pushed up against closed borders.

"If faith in our global refugee system is completely destroyed, the result will be a future in which people simply do not flee persecution at all and remain where they are to suffer whatever fate may befall them in countries not willing or able to protect them."

<http://www.canberratimes.com.au/federal-politics/political-news/revealed-the-cost-of-stopping-the-boats-put-at-96-billion-20160912-grea35.html>