

Project SafeCom News and Updates

Sunday, 30 September 2018

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69. Home Affairs: Public servant submits 29 fake medical certificates in sick leave ploy

1. Nick Riemer: Ramsay course offers stark choice to Australian universities

Canberra Times

By Nick Riemer

6 September 2018 — 12:00am

Pared down to its essentials, the Ramsay Centre for Western Civilisation course confronts Australian vice-chancellors with a stark choice: are they willing to let their institutions' authority to be used to bolster xenophobia and national chauvinism in our society?

The entire educational mission of the proposed Ramsay Centre is premised on the "civilisational" inferiority of non-Western cultures – the very ones Australian politicians go to war against in the Middle East, punish with interventions in the Northern Territory, stir up moral panics about and whose members they imprison in island camps when their boats come near our shores.

The Ramsay course has mainly been promoted by John Howard and Tony Abbott, the Ramsay board's most powerful members. Their enthusiasm for studying the heritage of the West doesn't spring from any newfound passion for Marcus Aurelius or Rousseau. Instead, the value of the Ramsay Centre to them lies in the intellectual legitimisation it would confer on the other political agendas they champion. Tony Abbott, after all, has insisted on the need for the Ramsay Centre to be explicitly "right-wing".

So far, most academics' commentary on Ramsay has focused on uniquely academic considerations — what texts and authors would be taught in Ramsay courses, how critically the history of European cultures would be presented to students, how much direct control the Ramsay Centre would exert over university processes. These questions are important, but they are not the central grounds on which Ramsay should be opposed.

Instead of focussing on these internal questions, universities should also be asking what purposes the degree will be used to advance outside their walls. The question is not so much what the Ramsay degree is, but what, in the eyes of its sponsors, it is for.

FULL STORY AT <https://www.canberratimes.com.au/politics/federal/ramsay-course-offers-stark-choice-to-australian-universities-20180905-p501yt.html>

2. Katharine Murphy: Morrison is a leader in a hurry – but not to end the disgrace of Nauru

With a mark to make and by-election to win, the PM is making haste, but that doesn't extend to children in detention

The Guardian

Sat 22 Sep 2018 09.20 AEST

Katharine Murphy

Morrison received a letter this week from the president of the Australian Medical Association, Tony Bartone, pleading for the government to step in and address the "humanitarian emergency" unfolding on Nauru. "Humanitarian emergency" were Bartone's words, and doctors, in my experience, use their words advisedly.

Bartone made it clear he was intervening because his membership, the medical profession, were in a state of "agitation" (again, his word) about what was going on in offshore immigration detention centres. There had been an escalation in reports of "catastrophic mental and physical health conditions being experienced by the asylum seekers, especially children".

The solution to this, in the AMA president's mind, was obvious. The kids and the families needed to be removed from Nauru, preferably to Australia, and the government needed to allow a delegation of medical professionals to go in and assess the situation and report publicly, so that people could be assured that it was being managed.

FULL STORY AT <https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2018/sep/22/morrison-is-a-leader-in-a-hurry-but-not-to-end-the-disgrace-of-nauru>

3. The Saturday Paper Exclusive: Australia enforces Nauru's blacklist

The Saturday Paper

Edition No. 223 SEPTEMBER 22 – 28, 2018

Martin McKenzie-Murray

The email came from the Nauruan president's chief of staff. It was directed to a senior official in the Australian Department of Immigration and followed a phone conversation between the two. The subject was a Nauruan man working for a

subcontractor in one of Australia's detention centres in the Pacific Island nation. He was on a Nauruan government blacklist, and the president's office wanted Australia's help to sack him.

The chief of staff wasn't freelancing – he'd been instructed by President Baron Waqa himself. Nor was he vague about his intention – the man in question was to be "blacklisted". Nothing in the email suggests the president's chief of staff had any doubt the Australian official was the best person with whom to lodge the request. Justification was given for the blacklisting, which The Saturday Paper has chosen not to detail, but investigations by this newspaper strongly suggest the justification offered was spurious. "Appreciate if the matter can be acted on accordingly," the email ends. The man's employment was terminated soon after.

The Nauru blacklist is a blunt instrument used by the Waqa government to punish political opponents. It is used pervasively and has been since at least 2015. The Saturday Paper has seen evidence that the Australian government was not only aware of the blacklist but helped the Nauruan government in its enforcement.

FULL STORY AT <https://www.thesaturdaypaper.com.au/news/immigration/2018/09/22/exclusive-australia-enforces-naurus-blacklist/15375384006889>

4. Children in Australia's offshore migrant center are so distraught, some have attempted suicide

Washington Post
By Siobhán O'Grady
September 20 at 9:19 AM

They've come from as far as Iran and Afghanistan, Somalia and Myanmar.

But the children are now stuck on Nauru, a desolate island in the South Pacific that's little more than eight miles square. They're caught in a strict Australian immigration system that has left them stranded. Some of them have become so depressed after years of living in limbo that they have lost their will to live, those working with them say.

About 100 children live on Nauru, one of the remote islands where Australia operates offshore processing centers for migrants. They've been there for so long that "several children have lost all hope to the point that they are no longer speaking or eating," Daniel Webb, director of legal advocacy at the Human Rights Law Center in Melbourne, told The Washington Post this week.

"Even some of the government's most senior medical advisers are warning that children may die," he said. "It's a miracle one hasn't died already."

When they left home, their families were hoping to reach Australia, where many planned to apply for asylum. But in 2013, Australian authorities changed their migration policy, authorizing the detention of migrants and asylum seekers who try to reach Australia by boat. Instead of being allowed into Australia, they are placed, apparently indefinitely, on Nauru, or Manus Island, which is part of Papua New Guinea.

Once sent offshore, asylum seekers have little hope of ever reaching Australia. They don't want to return to where they came from, but they often don't have anywhere else to go. Devastated by extensive phosphate strip mining, about 80 percent of the island is uninhabitable with much of the marine life killed by mining runoff. The weather is hot and humid year around.

FULL STORY AT <https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2018/09/20/children-australias-off-shore-migrant-center-are-so-distraught-some-have-attempted-suicide>

5. Holding children indefinitely in offshore detention is Australia's shame — and the world knows

IF YOU knew of the abuse children were suffering in detention on Nauru, you probably wouldn't support the stop-the-boats policy.

news.com.au
Malcolm Farr
SEPTEMBER 19, 2018 3:31PM

THEY are the unwilling trophies of a steely enforcement of the government's stop-the-boats policy — a role no child deserves.

The 102 minors held on Nauru now have another function, as global emblems of Australia's capacity for brutality and unfairness.

The tolerance of Australians for the abuses of youngsters in the name of border protection will increasingly be tested as more details of their plights emerge.

We will be confronted by terms such as “resignation syndrome”, a psychiatric disorder that drives a child to abandon all hopes of a better life.

It is a disorder the Coalition Government and the Labor Opposition will hear more of as medical experts, including the government’s own, list in public the illnesses developing in the wretched conditions on Nauru.

Underlining the tragedy are reports youngsters have contemplated or attempted suicide as the only means to escape from a detention that in some cases they have endured for half or even all of their lives.

FULL STORY AT <https://www.news.com.au/lifestyle/real-life/holding-children-indefinitely-in-offshore-detention-is-australias-shame-and-the-world-knows/news-story/59d85254b4a18e46efad53739eb08967>

6. New York Times: In Australia, One Man Can Decide a Migrant’s Fate. Did He Abuse That Power?

New York Times

By Damien Cave and Isabella Kwai

Sept. 6, 2018

SYDNEY, Australia — When a suicidal 10-year-old boy in an offshore detention camp asked to come to Australia for psychiatric care, Peter Dutton’s answer was no.

When an Australian combat veteran requested a refugee visa for his Afghan interpreter, Mr. Dutton — Australia’s top immigration official — also refused.

But when an Italian au pair, who worked for a former colleague, needed a reprieve from deportation, Mr. Dutton obliged. It was at least the second European au pair for whom he made an exception in 2015, calling the visa a “humanitarian act.”

Critics across Australia are calling it something else: hypocrisy that reveals an unjust immigration system.

FULL STORY AT <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/09/06/world/australia/peter-dutton-au-pair.html>

7. Australia is reported to UN human rights council over illegal detention of asylum seekers

Government condemned for arbitrary detention of three asylum seekers, including a stateless man held for nearly nine years

The Guardian

Ben Doherty

Sat 15 Sep 2018 06.00 AEST

United Nations body has condemned Australia’s arbitrary detention of three asylum seekers, one of whom has been held without charge or trial for nearly nine years.

The UN working group on arbitrary detention – which reports to the human rights council, on which Australia sits – said in its annual report it was concerned by “the rising prevalence of deprivation of liberty of immigrants and asylum seekers” worldwide and “the growing use of detention in the context of migration”.

The report highlighted 94 cases of arbitrary detention from countries – democratic and otherwise – across the globe, including China, Libya, Israel, Pakistan, the US, Zimbabwe, Burundi and the Congo.

Twelve defectors from North Korea are held without charge or trial by South Korea, children are being held arbitrarily in Egypt and Israel, and in Ethiopia, people have been released under international attention and pressure, only to be re-arrested and detained.

FULL STORY AT <https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2018/sep/15/australia-is-reported-to-un-human-rights-council-over-illegal-detention-of-asylum-seekers>

8. 'Afront to human rights': top UN official slams Australia's offshore detention

Michelle Bachelet says hardline migration policies offer 'suffering and chaos' and calls on world to cooperate

The Guardian

Ben Doherty

Tue 11 Sep 2018 07.01 AEST

Australia's offshore processing immigration regime is "an affront to the protection of human rights", the new UN new human rights chief has said in an excoriating maiden speech reflecting on the state of rights globally.

In her first address to the human rights council, Michelle Bachelet, the former president of Chile, said the council had a responsibility to speak out against human rights violations without fear or favour, "regardless of sex, gender identity, race or ethnicity, religion, disability or migration status".

"Irrespective of the type of political regime in a given country, the human rights council has the duty to advocate ... in upholding all rights."

Australia is one of 47 countries that sits on the powerful UN council, based in Geneva. It won a seat after a years-long, multimillion-dollar diplomatic- and aid-backed campaign for election. Bachelet is the new UN high commissioner for human rights, following the Jordanian Zeid Raad Al Hussein.

FULL STORY AT <https://www.theguardian.com/law/2018/sep/11/affront-to-human-rights-top-un-official-slams-australias-offshore-detention>

9. New data highlight Australia's poor human rights performance

Human Rights Measurement Initiative

September 3rd, 2018

BY THALIA KEHOE ROWDEN

A 12-year-old girl in Nauru who set herself alight is just one of many refugee children there who are suffering from 'resignation syndrome,' a form of mental illness where they find life to be without hope and unbearable.

As human rights defenders turn the spotlight on Australia's off-shore detention policies, the Human Rights Measurement Initiative (HRMI)'s new dataset shows how poorly the country is performing in several areas of human rights. Our data put numbers alongside stories coming out of Nauru, showing they are not anomalies, but part of a pattern of human rights violations.

FULL STORY AT <https://humanrightsmeasurement.org/new-data-highlight-australias-poor-human-rights-performance/>

10. Abdul Karim Hekmat: I am not a 'death meat' of Australia

After more than five years on Nauru, Ashkan watches as his partner, Nima, descends into a catatonic state, denied medical treatment by Australia. By Abdul Karim Hekmat.

The Saturday Paper

Edition No. 222 SEPTEMBER 15 – 21, 2018

By Abdul Karim Hekmat

For the past month, Nima has been bedridden with severe depression and trauma. He has recently stopped talking and eating, communicating only with his fingers. The one-bedroom house he shares on Nauru with his partner, Ashkan, is always dark. His eyes can no longer tolerate light. "He is lying on a bed like a corpse," Ashkan, a Kurdish refugee, told me last week. "Too sick even to go to toilet himself."

FULL STORY AT <https://www.thesaturdaypaper.com.au/news/politics/2018/09/15/i-am-not-death-meat-australia/15369336006856>

11. Ex-Border Force boss Roman Quaedvlieg describes drug dealing, prostitution, woman's self-immolation attempt on Nauru

ABC News

By political reporter Dan Conifer

Updated Sept 6, 2018 at 5:13pm

The former boss of Australia's Border Force has detailed claims of drug dealing, prostitution and squalor at Australia's immigration facilities on Nauru.

Roman Quaedvlieg, who was sacked earlier this year, has written about the conditions facing nearly 1,000 asylum seekers and refugees held on the Pacific island on behalf of the Australian Government.

Mr Quaedvlieg described one refugee village as "reminiscent of the world's slums" and said the island's hospital was in "ruin".

"The roof had partially collapsed and sheets of what looked like asbestos were conspicuous in their angularity," he wrote of the hospital.

FULL STORY AT <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2018-09-06/ex-border-force-describes-conditions-on-nauru-drugs-prostitution/10209126>

12. Removing asylum seekers from support payments 'sends a message'

RN Breakfast

By Max Chalmers

Thurs 6 September 2018

The Federal Government has started cutting off support payments to asylum seekers living in Australia as they wait for their refugee claims to be assessed.

The Refugee Council has told RN Breakfast that 400 people lost their payments in August, with more expected to be removed from the program in the coming months.

The changes were flagged earlier in the year and drew an immediate outcry from refugee groups, who warned they would leave thousands of people facing homelessness and destitution.

The Department of Home Affairs is standing by the changes, saying the program is only designed to provide short-term aid and that asylum seekers are expected to support themselves.

FULL STORY AT <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2018-09-06/asylum-seekers-removed-from-support-payments/10203008>

13. 'I stopped these': Scott Morrison keeps migrant boat trophy in office

Australian prime minister who was instrumental in designing harsh border protection policies displays a block of metal in the shape of an Asian fishing boat

The Guardian

Helen Davidson

Wed 19 Sep 2018 14.16 AEST

It stands on a desk in the prime minister's office. A laser-cut block of metal in the shape of an Asian fishing boat, sitting on a gently curving wave, with the thick black lettering: "I stopped these".

When the New York Times interviewed Australia's new prime minister, Scott Morrison, the article contained a previously unknown detail: "His office features a model migrant boat bearing the proud declaration 'I Stopped These'."

Morrison was instrumental in designing the country's notoriously harsh border protection policies when he was immigration minister in the Abbott government.

Morrison and his successor, Peter Dutton, have never been apologetic over the Operation Sovereign Borders policy which includes offshore processing and turnbacks of asylum seeker vessels, because it brought to an end the deaths of people when boats often capsized.

FULL STORY AT <https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2018/sep/19/i-stopped-these-scott-morrison-keeps-migrant-boat-trophy-in-office>

14. 'We stopped these': Roman Quaedvlieg says Scott Morrison gave him boat trophy

Former border force head says he was handed a migrant boat model as a thank-you gift for work on border protection

The Guardian
Helen Davidson
Sat 22 Sep 2018 13.55 AEST

Scott Morrison gave a model of an asylum-seeker boat emblazoned with the words "We stopped these" to Roman Quaedvlieg as a thank-you gift for his work on the Coalition's border protection policy, Quaedvlieg has said.

The gift was a replica of one that Morrison said was a gift from a constituent, with the words "I stopped these", referring to the fishing boats used to transport asylum seekers – mainly via Indonesia – to Australia to seek refuge.

Morrison said his model had been with him for about four years but he did not mention that he had also given out others as gifts.

On Friday, former Australian Border Force commissioner Quaedvlieg – who was sacked in March after an investigation into allegations he helped get a job at Sydney Airport for a junior staff member with whom he was in a relationship – tweeted a photo of his own boat model. It has a slightly different inscription and a handwritten thank-you note on the back signed by Morrison.

FULL STORY AT <https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2018/sep/22/we-stopped-these-roman-quaedvlieg-says-scott-morrison-gave-him-boat-trophy>

15. Rapper MIA urges Australian airlines to refuse forced deportations

Exclusive: Activists say airline should not cooperate, but Qantas says it's up to the government and courts

The Guardian
Helen Davidson
Sat 22 Sep 2018 06.00 AEST

Rapper MIA has called for Australian airlines to stop assisting with the forced deportation of asylum seekers, amid a campaign for the industry to take a stand on human rights.

In recent weeks, at least 12 Sri Lankan asylum seekers have been deported from Australia, and at least one Iraqi national as well, who was deported despite a pending court date for an appeal.

The deportations are part of Australia's harsh immigration policies relating to asylum seekers and refugees, particularly those who have arrived in the country by boat, and thousands are being detained in a network of facilities on Australia's mainland as well as offshore.

"The stories of how children, women and men are treated when they seek asylum in Australia are horrifying," MIA, whose real name is Mathangi Arulpragasam, told Guardian Australia.

"If the Australian government won't treat refugees and asylum seekers with dignity and fairness, then it falls to the rest of us to make sure that they are given the best chance to rebuild their life in peace."

FULL STORY AT <https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2018/sep/22/rapper-mia-urges-australian-airlines-to-refuse-forced-deportations>

16. Aboriginal man Daniel Love facing deportation to PNG, lawyers say

ABC News
Exclusive by Mark Willacy, ABC Investigations
Posted September 19, 2018 06:45:55

Lawyers have accused the Federal Government of locking up an Aboriginal man in immigration detention and preparing to deport him to Papua New Guinea.

They will take his case to the High Court, arguing it is a constitutional issue.

Daniel Love, who was born in Papua New Guinea to a PNG mother and Aboriginal father, was taken to the Brisbane Immigration Transit Accommodation Centre last month after being released from prison.

The 39-year old father-of-five served 12 months for assault occasioning bodily harm and has an extensive criminal history.

A delegate for the Minister for Home Affairs, Peter Dutton, cancelled Mr Love's permanent residency visa under the character test section of the Migration Act 1958.

FULL STORY AT <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2018-09-19/aboriginal-man-facing-deportation-to-png-takes-case-high-court/10262952>

17. An Aboriginal Man Spent Seven Months In Immigration Detention

Daniel Love isn't the first Aboriginal person to face deportation from Australia.

BuzzFeed

Posted on September 27, 2018, at 3:33 p.m.

Hannah Ryan

Daniel Love – the Aboriginal man released today from immigration detention after facing deportation to Papua New Guinea, a country he left when he was five years old – is not the first Indigenous person to be threatened with deportation from Australia.

Lawyers and advocates have described other cases to BuzzFeed News in which Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander people have ended up in immigration detention, with one saying that "probably a month doesn't go by" where he doesn't come across an Indigenous person who is in immigration detention or facing visa cancellation. In some cases, Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander people have been deported.

The reasons for this are varied and complex, but include a huge increase in visa cancellations on character grounds in the last four years and the fact that some Indigenous people do not know they are not Australian citizens.

FULL STORY AT <https://www.buzzfeed.com/hannahryan/aboriginal-indigenous-immigration-detention>

18. Government revokes decision to deport Daniel Love to PNG

Aboriginal man Daniel Love has been released from immigration detention after the Australian government decided not to deport him to Papua New Guinea.

SBS News

By Ella Archibald-Binge

Source: NITV News 28 SEP 2018 - 9:37 AM

UPDATED 28 SEP 2018 - 9:50 AM

Lawyers acting for Daniel Love say common sense has prevailed after the Kamaroi man - who was born in PNG - was released on Thursday after almost two months in immigration detention in Brisbane.

The Department of Home Affairs has also reinstated his permanent residency visa.

"This is the right decision and one that is welcomed by Daniel and his family," Mr Love's lawyer Rod Hodgson said.

"As we have maintained throughout this case, Daniel should never have been placed into immigration detention – he is an Aboriginal Australian with a proud family history and it is a great relief that the Department have now also taken the sensible step of releasing him from detention.

FULL STORY AT <https://www.sbs.com.au/nitv/article/2018/09/28/government-revokes-decision-deport-daniel-love-png>

19. Seventeen Manus refugees leave PNG to be resettled in the US

Refugee Action Coalition

September 25, 2018

Ian Rintoul 0417 275 713

Seventeen refugees, held on Manus Island for almost five years, flew from Port Moresby today, Tuesday 25 September, to be resettled in the US.

The seventeen are single men, 11 Pakistanis, and six Rohingyas.

The total number of refugees from Manus accepted by the US so far is just 147. But over 600 remain in limbo on Manus or in Port Moresby, and around 800 on Nauru.

Recent interviews with US officials confirm that the US is not accepting Iranians, Somali, Sudanese, Iraqi or Syrian refugees for resettlement.

FULL STORY AT <http://www.refugeeaction.org.au/?p=7124>

20. Seventeen refugees flown from Manus to US

Seventeen refugees being held on Manus Island have flown to the United States under a people-swap deal struck between the US and Australia.

news.com.au
Daniel McCulloch
Australian Associated Press
SEPTEMBER 25, 2018 11:53AM

Seventeen single men being held on Manus Island have flown to the United States under a refugee resettlement deal with Australia.

The 11 Pakistanis and six Rohingyas flew out of Port Moresby on Tuesday after almost five years in immigration detention.

Their departure takes to 147 the number of refugees who have departed Papua New Guinea to start new lives in America.

Another 214 refugees have been taken from Nauru.

FULL STORY AT <https://www.news.com.au/national/breaking-news/seventeen-refugees-flown-from-manus-to-us/news-story/3b45136a3971eaeecc540e93296623c13>

21. Eight Manus refugees to the US; hundreds left in limbo; medical crisis continues

Refugee Action Coalition
September 18, 2018
Ian Rintoul 0417 275 713

Eight refugees, single men previously held on Manus Island, flew from Port Moresby today, Tuesday 18 September, to be resettled in the US.

The eight are single men, one Iranian, two Tamils, two Pakistanis, two Rohingyas and one Afghan.

The total number of refugees from Manus accepted by the US so far is just 130. Over 600 remain on Manus or in Port Moresby.

The Iranian refugee is the only Iranian from Manus Island that has been accepted by the United States this year. One Iranian refugee was also accepted from Nauru on 29 July.

But the two Iranians are the 'exception that proves the rule' that the Trump travel ban remains in place; every other Iranian refugee on Manus and Nauru considered by the US this year has been rejected.

FULL STORY AT <http://www.refugeeaction.org.au/?p=7116>

22. Saba Vasefi: 'Kill me, I can't cope': Refugee women on Nauru robbed of their dignity speak out

Women who have escaped oppression in Iran face similar intimidation in Australia, often by advocates claiming to help them

The Guardian
Tue 18 Sep 2018 12.54 AEST
Saba Vasefi

Fascists kill. But for those damaged survivors who flee persecution, and face a new authoritarianism, sustaining themselves can be a monumental personal undertaking.

Before I discuss four stages of redistributive justice, I'll record examples of threat and intimidation which make the struggle for justice so necessary.

"Kill me, I can't cope anymore. Only death can rescue me" is one of the most common phrases that I heard from women and children on death row in Iran and women and children facing indefinite detention by Australia on the island of Nauru. There's common ground between the fundamentalist Iranian government and the Australian immigration policy on Nauru. Each is authoritarian.

There is a strong case for comparing cruelties in Iran's penal code with the Australian government's policy of imprisoning women and children on Nauru who have committed no offence. They have also been robbed of their dignity and right to life.

FULL STORY AT <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2018/sep/18/kill-me-i-cant-cope-anymore-nauru-women-robbed-of-their-dignity-speak-out>

23. Court orders Peter Dutton to transfer ill family of three from Nauru

Judge stipulates no treatment by Border Force contractor or health provider IHMS

The Guardian
Saba Vasefi and Helen Davidson
Tue 25 Sep 2018 10.42 AEST

The federal court has once again enforced the medical evacuation of dangerously ill asylum seekers and refugees from Nauru, ordering the home affairs minister, Peter Dutton, to transfer a family of three over the weekend.

The order, delivered by Justice Tom Thawley on Friday, also stipulated that they not be treated by anyone contracted by Australian Border Force or detention health provider IHMS.

It also addressed the long-held concerns of advocates and lawyers of sudden transfers back to Nauru, by ordering the department to give five business days' notice of any plan to do so to the family's solicitor or, if no solicitor is registered, the family itself.

Thawley also ordered the minister to pay costs.

Guardian Australia has confirmed the family, which includes a mother, her minor-aged son, and her daughter-in law, arrived in Australia over the weekend and are receiving treatment.

FULL STORY AT <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/sep/25/court-orders-peter-dutton-to-transfer-ill-family-of-three-from-nauru>

24. Australia spent \$320,000 fighting requests for urgent medical transfers of asylum seekers

Cost likely to be far higher this year, with a growing number of critically ill people seeking federal court intervention

The Guardian
Helen Davidson
Sat 29 Sep 2018 06.00 AEST

The federal government spent more than \$320,000 in legal costs last financial year on challenging requests for urgent medical transfers of asylum seekers and refugees on Nauru and Manus Island.

The cost is likely to be far higher this year, with a growing number of critically ill people seeking the federal court's intervention after officials refuse recommendations from doctors to bring them to Australia.

In many cases doctors have repeatedly recommended transfers for patient, sometimes for months or years, only for the recommendations to go unheeded by governing authorities, including both the Australian and Nauruan governments, until a federal court order for a medical transfer can be obtained.

In responding to questions on notice to the Senate last month, the department of home affairs revealed it had incurred \$326,012 in legal costs in responding to those court proceedings.

FULL STORY AT <https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2018/sep/29/australia-spent-320000-fighting-requests-for-urgent-medical-transfers-of-asylum-seekers>

25. Nauru blocking refugee evacuations a problem of Australia's creation – judge

Commonwealth 'created this situation' by setting up regional processing deal with another sovereign state, Justice Debra Mortimer says

The Guardian
Helen Davidson
Tue 25 Sep 2018 04.00 AEST

Nauru's attempts to block court-ordered medical evacuations of refugees is a problem of the Australian government's creation, a federal court judge has said in a damning ruling.

Justice Debra Mortimer made the comments early last week while ordering the urgent transfer of a young woman who was ill after trying to take her own life, after she was allegedly raped on the same day she was denied US resettlement.

While lawyers argued, the judgment revealed, the woman told her team she was sitting in her own vomit and asking for help.

In arguing against the transfer, lawyers for Australia's home affairs minister, Peter Dutton, told the court there had been "ongoing issues" with the Nauruan government not granting approval for air ambulances to land and pick up patients for transfer to Australia.

"The position of the government of Nauru remains one that is capable of interfering with the respondents being able to carry out the orders of this Court," Mortimer said in last week's judgment.

FULL STORY AT <https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2018/sep/25/nauru-blocking-refugee-evacuations-a-problem-of-australias-creation-judge>

26. Australia let Nauru block refugee medical transfers to preserve 'relationship'

Border force official says it cancelled evacuations against Australian court orders and medical advice so as not to compromise regional processing ties

The Guardian
Helen Davidson
Sun 30 Sep 2018 13.13 AEST

Australian authorities were unable to send an air ambulance to Nauru for a court-ordered medical transfer after the Nauruan government refused permission, because to do so would affect the "working relationship" on offshore processing, a senior official has said.

At least twice in recent weeks the Nauruan government has refused to give permission for an air ambulance to land and take a refugee to Australia for urgent medical care, despite court orders and doctor recommendations.

The cases have added to growing concerns over inadequate healthcare and the complications of different tiers and standards of care, as well as alleged political motivations interfering with the transfer process.

In the first case, that of a refugee known as ELF18, the refusal came from the Nauruan secretary for multicultural affairs, Barina Waqa, who was "just not convinced" the case was serious. Australian Border Force did not defy the refusal, technically breaching the court order.

FULL STORY AT <https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2018/sep/30/australia-nauru-medical-transfers-relationship>

27. Vietnamese asylum seeker pleads to stay in Australia with baby daughter

Huyen Tran, who arrived on a boat while fleeing religious persecution, says she could be killed if deported

The Guardian
Australian Associated Press
Mon 1 Oct 2018 17.31 AEST

A Vietnamese asylum seeker faces an anxious wait to learn if a Melbourne judge will support her proposed deportation and separation from her baby daughter.

Huyen Tran, 29, arrived in Australia on a boat in 2011 after fleeing religious persecution in her home country. She has spent almost a year in detention and, in that time, gave birth to her daughter, Isabella, who is six-months-old.

"If I would be deported to Vietnam I could be sent to jail or even killed," Tran said through an interpreter in Melbourne's federal circuit court on Monday. "I don't want that to happen because if I was killed my daughter wouldn't have a mother."

Tran said that, as a Catholic in a communist and non-religious country, she had been targeted and was not able to speak freely.

"In the past because I just try to protect the statue of Jesus's mother I was assaulted," she said. "I was given a hard time and I still have a scar on my head."

FULL STORY AT <https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2018/oct/01/vietnamese-asylum-seeker-pleads-to-stay-in-australia-with-baby-daughter>

28. Labor could refer plans to outsource visa processing to Senate estimates

Opposition says ministers with links to any of the bidding groups should not be part of decision-making process

The Guardian
Helen Davidson
Sat 22 Sep 2018 08.08 AEST

Labor may use Senate estimates to further question the government's planned outsourcing of a \$1bn visa processing system, amid calls for ministers linked to one of the bidding groups to recuse themselves from the decision-making process.

A member of one of two consortiums reportedly being explored as a potential bidder is Pacific Blue Capital, run by Scott Briggs.

It holds 19% of the Australia Visa Processing consortium, which also includes Qantas Ventures, PwC and Ellerston Capital. The other group in the running comprises Accenture and Australia Post.

Briggs is a friend and former employee of Malcolm Turnbull, president of Scott Morrison's electorate conference, board member of the Cronulla Sharks – of which Morrison is the number one ticket holder – and a former colleague of the immigration minister, David Coleman.

Briggs is also said to have advised Morrison during the recent leadership spill.

FULL STORY AT <https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2018/sep/22/labor-could-refer-plans-to-outsource-visa-processing-to-senate-estimates>

29. Company linked to alleged foreign bribery conspiracy in Nauru received \$2.5m Australian government contract

ABC-TV - 7.30
By Alex McDonald and Paul Farrell
Posted 17 Sep 2018, 5:51pm

A company linked to an alleged conspiracy to bribe foreign officials on Nauru received a \$2.5 million Australian government contract to build housing for refugees held on the island.

Last week the Australian Federal Police (AFP) charged Mozammil Gulamabbas Bhojani with one count of conspiracy to bribe a foreign public official under Australia's criminal code.

The AFP alleges Sydney-based Mr Bhojani provided the Nauruan officials with more than \$100,000 in kickbacks in exchange for favourable phosphate shipments for his company, Radiance International Pty Ltd

Mr Bhojani is a director of Radiance International Pty Ltd and a global group of related companies, including Radiance International Inc, which specialise in trading rock phosphate.

7.30 can reveal that Radiance International Inc received the \$2.5 million contract from the Australian Department of Home Affairs for refugee accommodation structures on Nauru.

FULL STORY AT <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2018-09-17/company-linked-to-alleged-nauru-bribery-received-2.5m-from-aus/10258152>

30. Desperation and suicide stalk refugees on Australia's 'Pacific gulag'

Desperate people prevented from reaching Australian shores spend years trapped in a camp on the island of Nauru

Agence France-Presse

September 11, 2018

Updated: September 11, 2018 03:11 PM

Refugee settlement camp number five, a cluster of prefabricated huts poking out of Nauru's sweltering rocky landscape, is a place defined by desperation and rarely visited by outsiders.

Access to the weed-infested camp is severely restricted. The residents are there against their will, the subjects of a controversial deal between this island's government and the Australian authorities, keen to prevent boatpeople setting foot on their shores.

Most are asylum seekers who tried to reach Australia by sea but were detained and processed in compounds run by the Nauru government and paid for by Canberra under its hardline immigration policy.

A swastika spray-painted on a large water tank alongside initials "ABF" make clear the inhabitants' views on the Australian Border Force, which helps oversee them.

Many are willing to speak only on condition of anonymity, but they describe existence on this remote speck of land in the South Pacific as devoid of hope and filled with a desperation that has driven some to attempt suicide.

FULL STORY AT <https://www.thenational.ae/world/oceania/desperation-and-suicide-stalk-refugees-on-australia-s-pacific-gulag-1.769116>

31. Suicidal 12-year-old refugee on Nauru will die if not removed, doctors say

The girl has PTSD and Border Force has received multiple warnings about her health

The Guardian

Ben Doherty

Wed 12 Sep 2018 11.37 AEST

A 12-year-old refugee who has made repeated suicide attempts on Nauru will die if she is not taken off the island, doctors have said in the latest of more than half a dozen warnings about her health to the Australian Border Force.

The girl is suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder and major depressive disorder. She is eating "almost nothing", according to those caring for her, and has made multiple attempts to kill herself, including by setting herself on fire.

"If S does not receive treatment, her physical and mental health are very likely to continue [their] deterioration, with an ongoing high risk of suicide or death secondary to the consequences to dehydration or malnourishment," the latest doctor's report, filed on Tuesday, said.

"She should be moved to an appropriate child and adolescent inpatient facility at the earliest opportunity."

FULL STORY AT <https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2018/sep/12/suicidal-12-year-old-refugee-on-nauru-will-die-if-not-removed-doctors-say>

32. Australia deports Iraqi asylum seeker whose appeal was due next week

Lawyers scrambled to get a legal injunction preventing the deportation but were kept from contacting the man in time

The Guardian

Helen Davidson

Thu 13 Sep 2018 18.33 AEST

Australian immigration authorities have deported an Iraqi asylum seeker against his will and despite there being a pending court case scheduled to sit next week.

Advocates and lawyers scrambled on Wednesday night to get a legal injunction but were prevented from contacting the man on the phone, and by the time a barrister was found to lodge an injunction, the asylum seeker was already on a plane.

The man was scheduled to have an appeal before the federal circuit court on 19 September – next week.

The Iraqi ambassador to Australia, Dr Hussain Mahdi Al-Ameri, last year said his embassy would not issue travel documents to Iraqi asylum seekers unless they were clearly willing and had written a request.

The Iraqi embassy was contacted by advocates for the man on Wednesday, and advised of the deportation.

FULL STORY AT <https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2018/sep/13/australia-deports-iraqi-man-asylum-seeker-whose-appeal-was-due-next-week>

33. Sri Lankan asylum seekers forcibly deported from Australia despite torture risk

At least a dozen men put on specially chartered jet that left Perth at 2am

The Guardian
Ben Doherty
Tue 11 Sep 2018 15.36 AEST

At least a dozen Sri Lankan asylum seekers have been forcibly deported back to Sri Lanka, having been put on a specially chartered jet that left Perth at 2am on Tuesday.

Some of the men deported had been in detention for more than six years in Australia, while others still had challenges before Australian courts pending. The majority were Tamil, but at least one was Sinhalese.

Guardian Australia has been provided with details of some of those returned but has chosen not to name them out of concern for their safety. Several had reported to Australian authorities they had previously been abducted and tortured by security forces in Sri Lanka.

The asylum seekers were transported from detention centres across Australia and taken to Perth, from where they were flown out on a charter flight run by Skytraders. The flight left at 1.57am.

FULL STORY AT <https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2018/sep/11/sri-lankan-asylum-seekers-forcibly-deported-from-australia-despite-torture-risk>

34. Coroner to investigate refugee self-immolation death

An inquest has been announced into the 2016 death of 23-year-old Omid Masoumali.

SBS News
Updated Monday September 17, 2018
By Stefan Armbruster

Queensland's coroner will investigate the death of Iranian refugee Omid Masoumali who set himself on fire on Nauru in 2016 during a visit by the United Nations refugee agency UNHCR.

The inquest will examine "whereby the deceased was seen to set fire to his own clothing and the factors precipitating his decision to take that action" and "the health and medical evacuation services provided to the deceased", the coroner's office said in a public notice.

Graphic video footage recorded on 27 April 2016, showed Mr Masoumali on fire in front of UN officials inspecting conditions in the Australian-run off-shore processing facility and another video showed him screaming in pain in hospital.

FULL STORY AT <https://www.sbs.com.au/news/coroner-to-investigate-refugee-self-immolation-death>

35. Manus mental health crisis as refugee swallows razor blades

Refugee Action Coalition
September 16, 2018
Ian Rintoul 0417 275 713

Refugee advocates have called for urgent medical attention for a 46-year-old Iraqi refugee who has been hospitalised in Port Moresby after swallowing razor blades.

The refugee has swallowed a total of eight blades – six last Friday morning, 14 September, and then two more after he was admitted to hospital.

On Saturday morning, 15 September, still in the hospital, he swallowed a pair of nail clippers.

He has had one scan to locate the blades and nail clippers, but there has been no more treatment. He is now passing blood.

Since being on Manus, the man has been sent to Port Moresby three times for treatment. This time, he has been in Port Moresby for 17 months, waiting for treatment for an intractable stomach ailment.

His case has highlighted the lack of medical or mental health care available for refugees in Manus or Port Moresby.

FULL STORY AT <http://www.refugeeaction.org.au/?p=7113>

36. Nauru: From economic goldmine to refugee 'hell'

Mainichi Japan
September 16, 2018

AIWO, Naru (Kyodo) -- Two giant metal structures jut out from the sub-equatorial waters off the western Pacific island nation of Nauru. Now collapsed and abandoned, the former phosphate loading stations are evidence of a mining boom and economic downfall that saw one of the wealthiest nations in the world become one of the poorest in a generation.

At just 21 square kilometers, Nauru was once home to the purest phosphate reserves in the world. Nauru's phosphate -- created from the droppings of birds migrating across the ocean for thousands of years -- is a prized and essential ingredient in fertilizer.

In the mid-1970s when the country's economy peaked, Nauru's gross domestic product per capita was estimated at \$50,000, second only to Saudi Arabia.

As the good times rolled, the government established the Nauru Phosphate Royalties Trust, a sovereign wealth fund that invested in international real estate. The country bought a fleet of Boeing 737 aircraft, public services were free and taxes virtually non-existent.

FULL STORY AT <https://mainichi.jp/english/articles/20180916/p2g/00m/0fe/053000c>

37. Martin McKenzie-Murray: Nauru's fraught Pacific relations exposed

As host of this week's Pacific Islands Forum, Nauru faced uncomfortable questions about its compromised relationship with Australia and censure of its stance towards China. By Martin McKenzie-Murray

The Saturday Paper
Edition No. 221 September 8 – 14, 2018
By Martin McKenzie-Murray

This week, in recognition of Nauru's 50th anniversary of independence, the microstate hosted the region's principal political meeting, the annual Pacific Islands Forum. Within a day, the conference exposed the region's tensions and anxieties: on climate change, Chinese influence, Australia's offshore detention and the host's authoritarianism. Within 48 hours, those tensions had become reality: Nauru was feuding with China, had detained a New Zealand journalist for interviewing refugees, and had been condemned by the Samoan leader for refusing to stamp the passports of Chinese diplomats. Meanwhile, one delegate told me the issues of climate change – the "most significant security issue for us" – and Nauru's abandonment of transparency and judicial independence had been buried.

FULL STORY AT <https://www.thesaturdaypaper.com.au/news/politics/2018/09/08/naurus-fraught-pacific-relations-exposed/15363288006828>

38. Refugees Detained on Nauru Plead for Resettlement as Regional Leaders Meet on the Island

Asylum seekers are being detained on Nauru by the Australian government.

SEPT. 5, 2018
globalcitizen.org
Brought to you by: Thomson Reuters Foundation
By Jared Ferrie

PHNOM PENH, Sept 5 (Thomson Reuters Foundation) — Children detained by Australia on the Pacific island of Nauru are suffering mentally and some attempting suicide, according to human rights groups and refugees who appealed to a regional leaders meeting on Wednesday to resettle them elsewhere.

Australia sends people intercepted at sea while trying to reach its shores to offshore centres including on Nauru, an island with a population of just over 11,000, where leaders have gathered this week for the Pacific Islands Forum.

About 900 people are on Nauru, including 109 children, according to a report this week by the Refugee Council of Australia.

Some of them are suffering traumatic withdrawal syndrome which means "giving up on engagement with the world," the Refugee Council of Australia said in its report.

FULL STORY AT <https://www.globalcitizen.org/en/content/refugees-nauru-plead-resettlement/>

39. 'Winning the lottery': Australian ministers waved through dozens of visitor visas

Further examples of ministerial interventions emerge as Peter Dutton comes under fire over cases of two au pairs

The Guardian
Lisa Martin
Sun 2 Sep 2018 10.23 AEST

Immigration ministers have intervened to grant more than 30 visitors visas to foreign tourists to Australia over the past six years.

In the wake of revelations showing Peter Dutton, in 2015, approved visitor visas to an Italian and a French au pair facing deportation, Guardian Australia has examined statements to parliament of ministerial interventions.

The documents show out of the 1,159 ministerial interventions between January 2012 and end of June 2018 the vast majority involved humanitarian (refugee) visas, bridging visas or visas for former residents returning to Australia.

But there are at least 34 people who were granted "subclass 600" visitor visas. No details are given about the circumstances and there are no suggestions they all relate to au pair cases although at least two are known to.

FULL STORY AT <https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2018/sep/02/australian-ministers-waved-through-34-visitor-visas-since-2012>

40. The worrying thing is we don't know how many other visa cases Dutton influenced

It is difficult to find data on the nature of ministerial intervention and the average length of time it takes for the minister to make a decision to intervene or not. This kind of data blackout all began with Scott Morrison.

Crikey
Greg Barns
SEP 03, 2018

In the course of defending himself as more details emerge of his intervention to assist a family of Liberal Party donors keep a French au pair in the country, Home Affairs Minister Peter Dutton has noted "there were hundreds of cases each year where immigration ministers, including previous Labor ministers, considered cases 'where a visa has been cancelled or a negative decision is handed down by the department'."

Dutton is correct. But experience tells us that it is highly unusual for a minister to act with such alacrity when asked to intervene in a case. My experience, and that of many other lawyers and migration agents, is that individuals such as asylum seekers and New Zealanders — whose visas Dutton may have revoked because of criminal history — wait weeks and months for a reply from him or his office.

This is an anecdotal observation because it is difficult to find data on the nature of ministerial intervention and the average length of time it takes for the minister to make a decision to intervene or not.

The Department of Home Affairs, previously the Department of Immigration, used to publish detailed statistics about the number of ministerial interventions, what types of visas these related to, and how many intervention requests were acceded to and how many rejected. Data for 2012-13 is available in that convenient format. But it is difficult to find comparable data beyond that year — which, of course, was when Scott Morrison became immigration minister under Tony Abbott.

FULL STORY AT <https://www.crikey.com.au/2018/09/03/peter-dutton-visa-decisions-au-pair/>

41. Help for a 'friend': Roman Quaedvlieg reveals explosive evidence in Peter Dutton au pair scandal

The Age
By David Crowe
6 September 2018 — 10:57am

The former head of the Australian Border Force has come forward with explosive new evidence in the inquiry into Home Affairs Minister Peter Dutton, telling the Senate of a phone call from the minister's office to seek the release of an Italian au pair from detention.

Former ABF commissioner Roman Quaedvlieg wrote to the Senate inquiry to reveal the phone call he received from Mr Dutton's chief of staff in June 2015, seeking help for a "friend" of the minister who had an au pair in detention at Brisbane airport.

While Mr Dutton told Parliament in March that he could rule out any personal connection to the family that hired the au pair, the new evidence draws attention to the friendship as a reason for the minister's intervention.

FULL STORY AT <https://www.theage.com.au/politics/federal/help-for-a-friend-roman-quaedvlieg-reveals-explosive-evidence-in-peter-dutton-au-pair-scandal-20180906-p5021f.html>

42. Peter Dutton's au pair interventions slammed by former Immigration insiders

ABC-TV - 7.30
By Ashlynne McGhee
Tuesday, 4 September 2018

Former senior immigration officials have spoken out against Peter Dutton's decision to free two foreign nannies from immigration detention.

French au pair Alexandra Deuwel was freed in October 2015, after her prospective employer's cousin, AFL boss Gillon McLachlan, requested Mr Dutton's assistance.

A few months earlier, Mr Dutton ordered Italian nanny Michela Marchisio be released, after lobbying from her proposed boss, a policeman Mr Dutton worked with in Queensland.

Viviana Barrio worked for the Immigration Department for 23 years, including three years in charge of immigration at Melbourne Airport, where she regularly detained tourists she suspected would try to work.

"In 23 years, I've never seen a minister grant a tourist visa to an au pair," she told 7.30. "A minister should not be intervening in these kinds of cases. Intervention powers are very valuable."

"It's a lack of respect for the system that allows for compassionate circumstances in very extreme cases, not these kinds of cases."

FULL STORY AT <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2018-09-04/immigration-insiders-slam-peter-duttons-au-pair-interventions/10200990>

43. Peter Dutton could face no-confidence motion over au pair saga

The Guardian
Katharine Murphy Political editor
Mon 3 Sep 2018 19.00 AEST

The Greens and Labor will attempt to move a motion of no-confidence in the home affairs minister Peter Dutton when parliament resumes next week, inflicting an early test of the new prime minister's capacity to control the House.

One crossbencher, Andrew Wilkie, is on board for the vote, and negotiations continue with Cathy McGowan and Rebekha Sharkie. The numbers are tight in the House with the government down one courtesy of Malcolm Turnbull resigning as an MP.

While Dutton denied on Monday misleading the parliament about his use of ministerial discretion in the granting of tourist visas to au pairs, including one working for a former Queensland police colleague, the lower house Greens MP Adam Bandt said the minister has a case to answer.

FULL STORY AT <https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2018/sep/03/peter-dutton-could-face-no-confidence-motion-over-au-pair-saga>

44. Nauru: a nation in democratic freefall propped up by Australia

Judges have been sacked, opposition politicians jailed and citizens' rights eroded. Human rights advocates say there has been a breakdown in the rule of law on the Pacific island

The Guardian

Anne Davies and Ben Doherty

Mon 3 Sep 2018 04.00 AEST

As Marise Payne stands in her colourful shirt for the obligatory photo opportunity at the Pacific Islands Forum in Nauru this week, she might do well to consider the high price Australia pays to prop up one of the most dysfunctional governments on the planet.

As the newly minted foreign affairs minister, the arc of Australia's influence in the Pacific is now Payne's bailiwick, and Nauru is a country, it seems, edging closer to the cusp of democratic calamity.

Economically it is beholden: Nauru survives essentially on Australian largesse and self-interest.

In 2017-18 the Australian government directly provided two-thirds of Nauru's entire revenue of \$170m either as direct aid, resettlement and visa fees for refugees, fees to the Nauru Regional Processing Centre Corporation, or reimbursements to Nauru's government.

That's before the \$26m in taxes on high earners – paid mainly by Australians – and the airfares and charters on Nauru Airlines, the only way to reach the island.

FULL STORY AT <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/sep/03/nauru-a-nation-on-the-cusp-of-democratic-calamity>

45. Corruption, incompetence and a musical: Nauru's riches to rags tale

The once-wealthy island now barely survives on income from Australia's detention regime and is pinning its economic hopes on undersea mining

The Guardian

Anne Davies and Ben Doherty

Tue 4 Sep 2018 08.16 AEST

Nauru is banking on fields of mineral-rich smooth brown rocks about the size of a potato that lie on the sea floor around the tiny island as the possible saviour of its fragile economy.

For the island nation of just 10,000 people, financial viability has been a pressing problem since the exhaustion of its rich phosphate deposits in the 1970s.

The nodules that lie 4km below the sea might be the answer. They are rich in the metals that are essential for the clean-energy industry: nickel, cobalt and manganese.

The deep-sea mining venture needed to tap the resource is being led by a Canadian company, DeepGreen, which is run by an Australian entrepreneur, Gerard Barron, and backed by mining giant Glencore and shipping company Maersk. It is in the exploration phase but results are promising and it hopes to begin mining in 2025.

For Nauru it will be just in time.

FULL STORY AT <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/sep/04/corruption-incompetence-and-a-musical-naurus-riches-to-rags-tale>

46. Nauru child health crisis threatens to overshadow Pacific Islands Forum

Australia's offshore processing regime under spotlight with at least 20 troubled refugee children on 'food and fluid refusal'

The Guardian

Ben Doherty and Anne Davies

Sun 2 Sep 2018 12.20 AEST

Nauru's hosting of the Pacific Islands Forum is at risk of being overshadowed by its role in Australia's offshore processing regime – in particular, the acute mental illness of dozens of refugee children.

Medical sources on Nauru say at least 20 children are in the Australian-run regional processing centre 1 (RPC1) on "food and fluid refusal" and at risk of permanent harm or death.

At least a dozen children, staff say, need evacuation urgently.

Other refugee children who remain in the community are also refusing to eat and drink, but are not receiving intensive medical care "because RPC1 is full of dangerously sick kids", a Nauru source said.

Nauru's president, Baron Waqa claimed, over the weekend that refugee advocates, along with the children's parents, were "pushing" refugee children to self-harm.

FULL STORY AT <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/sep/02/nauru-child-health-crisis-threatens-to-overshadow-pacific-island-forum>

47. Pacific Islands Forum masking human rights abuse - advocate

Radio NZ

Wed Sept 5, 2018, 6:39 am

A refugee advocate says behind the scenes of the Pacific Islands Forum on Nauru human rights abuses are continuing.

Ian Rintoul from the Refugee Action Coalition said journalists attending the forum need to look at the bigger picture.

Mr Rintoul said to avoid scrutiny, staff working at Australia's refugee detention centres on the island have been told not to speak to the media.

He said despite the Nauru president's denial of a mental health crisis among about 900 refugees on the island, self harm was continuing.

"There's a woman on Nauru at the moment who's swallowed a razor blade," Mr Rintoul.

"There have been recommendations from doctors on Nauru and in Australia that she can't be treated on Nauru.

FULL STORY AT <https://www.radionz.co.nz/international/pacific-news/365690/pacific-islands-forum-masking-human-rights-abuse-advocate>

48. Doctors reject Nauru President Baron Waqa's claims refugee advocates 'pushing' kids in detention to self-harm

ABC News

By Jennine Khalik

Updated Sat Sept 1, 2018 at 8:02pm

Australian doctors have hit back at the President of Nauru's claims that refugee children in detention are self-harming to "short-circuit" the system to get to Australia.

In an interview with Sky News on Saturday, President Baron Waqa claimed refugee advocates, along with the children's parents, were "pushing" refugee children to self-harm.

"We tend to think ... these kids are pushed into doing something they're not aware of and the dangers of, if that is the case we are extremely worried," Mr Waqa said.

"It's the way of working the system, probably short-circuiting it, just to get to Australia."

Professor Louise Newman from Doctors for Justice said the claims were wrong.

"I reject any suggestions that refugee advocates were to blame for children self-harming on Nauru," Dr Newman said.

The ABC's 7.30 program recently detailed the conditions and trauma some of the 112 child asylum-seekers face in detention on Nauru.

Leaked documents compiled by immigration workers and obtained by 7.30 revealed a shocking spate of recent self-harm incidents.

FULL STORY AT <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2018-09-01/doctors-reject-nauru-claims-refugee-kids-self-harm-game-system/10191260>

49. Asylum seeker doctor removed from island as Nauruan Government blocks medical evacuation

ABC News

By Elise Worthington, ABC Investigations

Updated Sept 7, 2018

The ABC understands the most senior medical officer working with asylum seekers on Nauru has been removed from the island amid an ongoing stoush over the transfer of patients off the island.

Dr Christopher Jones, a Queensland GP, was told by the Australian Government's contractor, International Health and Medical Services(IHMS), that his visa was revoked last Thursday and he left the island the following day.

It was the Gold Coast doctor's second deployment to Nauru as a locum with IHMS.

It is not known if his employment has been terminated.

The ABC understands his departure follows an increased number of requests to the Nauruan Government's Overseas Medical Referral system for transfers of children off the island due to medical conditions and self-harm.

FULL STORY AT <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2018-09-07/asylum-seeker-doctor-removed-from-nauru/10208112>

50. Nauru 19: judge throws out case and rules protesters cannot receive a fair trial

Judge says government of Nauru has decided protesters are guilty and will spend whatever it takes to jail them

The Guardian

Ben Doherty

Thu 13 Sep 2018 14.19 AEST

The Nauru 19 cannot receive a fair trial in the country because the executive government has already decided they are guilty, and will do whatever it can, and spend whatever money it has, to convict and jail them, a senior judge has ruled.

In an excoriating judgment, the Australian judge Geoffrey Muecke said the actions of the Nauru government – and in particular those of justice minister David Adeang – were “a shameful affront to democracy”. The judge granted a permanent stay in the proceedings, meaning the case will not continue.

In the long-running case – arising from a protest in 2015 over the suspension of members of parliament for giving interviews to foreign media – the Nauru government has sought to convict and jail the protesters, whose number includes sitting parliamentarians, a former minister and a former president.

Muecke’s judgment said there was no chance of fair trial on Nauru, given the government’s attitude and actions towards the Nauru 19.

“My conclusion is that the executive government of Nauru does not want these defendants to receive a fair trial within a reasonable time as guaranteed to every Nauruan in the country’s constitution, being the supreme law of Nauru,” Muecke wrote.

“Further, I conclude that instead of fair trial for these defendants within a reasonable time, the executive government of Nauru wishes [only] that they, and each of them, be convicted and imprisoned for a long time, and that the government of Nauru is willing to expend whatever resources, including financial resources, as are required to achieve that aim.”

The judge accused Adeang of failing to uphold the constitution he is charged to defend.

FULL STORY AT <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/sep/13/nauru-19-judge-throws-out-case-and-rules-protesters-cannot-receive-a-fair-trial>

51. Nauru 19: island government to appeal decision to throw case out

Australian judge’s decision wrong in law and ‘needs to be corrected’, Nauru government says

The Guardian

Ben Doherty

Fri 14 Sep 2018 09.31 AEST

The Nauru government will appeal against the decision to permanently stay the trial of the Nauru 19, saying the judge's decision to halt the case was wrong and "needed to be corrected".

"If this is not done the community at large will never truly know whether or not those involved in the riot at parliament broke the law," a government spokesman said.

On Thursday, Australian judge Geoffrey Muecke, sitting as a judge of the Nauru supreme court, delivered a swinging judgement permanently staying the trial of the so-called Nauru 19, charged over a political rally held at Nauru's parliament in 2015.

The demonstrators, including a former president of Nauru, were some of hundreds protesting the banning of several parliamentarians from taking their seats in parliament for giving interviews to foreign media.

FULL STORY AT <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/sep/14/nauru-19-island-government-to-appeal-decision-to-throw-case-out>

52. AMA president calls for urgent transfer of refugee families from Nauru

Exclusive: Tony Bartone writes to Scott Morrison saying situation is 'a humanitarian emergency requiring urgent intervention'

The Guardian
Katharine Murphy Political editor
Thu 20 Sep 2018 04.00 AEST

The president of the Australian Medical Association has urged Scott Morrison to take urgent action to remove families and children from Nauru, preferably to the Australian mainland, to safeguard their physical and mental health.

In a letter to Morrison from Dr Tony Bartone, seen by Guardian Australia, the AMA president says the medical profession is "demanding a change of policy" in recognition that the situation on Nauru is now "a humanitarian emergency requiring urgent intervention".

As well as urging the new prime minister to change the policy he presided over as a former immigration minister, the AMA president has asked Morrison to facilitate access to Nauru for a delegation of Australian doctors to assess the health and wellbeing of people in detention.

The AMA president says the medical delegation would make their findings public "to assure the Australian public that the Australian government has done all that is possible to protect the health and wellbeing of asylum seekers and refugees".

Bartone says the AMA is also concerned about the health and wellbeing of asylum seekers in Papua New Guinea, and is seeking assurances "that the standard of healthcare in PNG is of an appropriate standard".

FULL STORY AT <https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2018/sep/20/ama-president-calls-for-urgent-transfer-of-refugee-families-from-nauru>

53. Scott Morrison rejects AMA plea to bring children from Nauru to Australia

Prime minister rebuffs letter as no confidence motion against Peter Dutton fails by one vote

The Guardian
Katharine Murphy Political editor
Thu 20 Sep 2018 15.52 AEST

Scott Morrison has rebuffed a plea from the Australian Medical Association to change policy on Nauru, and bring families and children to Australia, saying he will not "put at risk any element of Australia's border protection policy".

The prime minister told reporters on Thursday the government was already in the process of "getting families off Nauru" and had pursued a refugee resettlement deal with the United States to achieve that end.

But he said he had no intention of softening Australia's border protection policy, because Labor had adjusted the deterrence regime after the election of Kevin Rudd "thinking it would have no effect, then 1,200 people died".

FULL STORY AT <https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2018/sep/20/scott-morrison-rejects-ama-plea-to-bring-children-from-nauru-to-australia>

54. Nauru refugees: The island where children have given up on life

By Virginia Harrison
BBC News
1 September 2018

Suicide attempts and horrifying acts of self-harm are drawing fresh attention to the suffering of refugee children on Nauru, in what is being described as a "mental health crisis".

The tiny island nation, site of Australia's controversial offshore processing centre, has long been plagued with allegations of human rights abuses.

But a series of damning media reports recently has also highlighted a rapidly deteriorating situation for young people.

"We are starting to see suicidal behaviour in children as young as eight and 10 years old," says Louise Newman, professor of psychiatry at the University of Melbourne who works with families and children on the island.

"It's absolutely a crisis."

FULL STORY AT <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-45327058>

55. Nauru asylum seekers beyond 'broken' as calls for medical help surge

A new report lifts the lid on the government imposed secrecy surrounding Nauru's detention centre, detailing escalating levels of abuse, trauma and desperation.

SBS Television
Monday September 3, 2018
By Biwa Kwan

As Pacific Island leaders meet this week, a new report details the impact of Australia's offshore detention policy on refugee children on Nauru for the past six years.

The report says the situation for the 900 people detained on Nauru, 109 of them children, has surpassed the "worst fears" held by advocates when the policy was first implemented in 2012.

Authored by the Refugee Council of Australia and Refugee Asylum Seeker Resource Centre, the report found around 50 overseas medical requests were being actively blocked by the Australian government.

FULL STORY AT <https://www.sbs.com.au/news/nauru-asylum-seekers-beyond-broken-as-calls-for-medical-help-surge>

56. Nauru detention centre staff told they could lose jobs for talking about refugees

The Guardian
Ben Doherty
Thu 6 Sep 2018 04.00 AEST

Australian employees of the company that runs the immigration centre on Nauru say they have been threatened with their jobs if they speak to journalists during the Pacific Islands Forum about what happens inside the island's offshore processing regime.

In a leaked recording of a Canstruct meeting, employees are told they can talk about fishing, or give directions, but should be wary of journalists asking apparently innocent questions about the weather before "they might just then slip in a question about ... the processing centre".

"They want to get information. Obviously, we don't want to give out information about our company, because that's not what we do," Brisbane-based PR agent Lyall Mercer told Canstruct employees in a meeting on the island last week.

"We have a contract with the Australian government as well, and they won't allow us to talk about those things. Breaching that will jeopardise your employment contract."

Workers on the island have told Guardian Australia they felt threatened about speaking to the media: "the message was clear," one said.

FULL STORY AT <https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2018/sep/06/nauru-detention-centre-staff-told-they-could-lose-jobs-for-talking-about-refugees>

57. Nauru blocks court-ordered transfer of critically ill refugee to Australia

Move comes as a refugee blinded in 2014 attack on Manus Island centre finally transferred to Australia

The Guardian

Helen Davidson and Ben Doherty

Thu 6 Sep 2018 13.28 AEST

The Nauru government has blocked the transfer of a critically ill refugee to Australia for healthcare, despite a court order, because a senior official was “not convinced” she needed it, the federal court has heard.

The move comes as a refugee blinded in the 2014 attack on the Manus Island centre has finally been transferred to Australia, more than a year after doctors made urgent recommendations.

On Monday the Australian federal court ordered the Australian home affairs minister transfer the critically ill woman on Nauru, who suffers from a number of mental illnesses including post-traumatic stress and depression, to Australia within 48 hours, accompanied by her brother.

However, according to the ABC, the Nauruan secretary of multicultural affairs refused to approve an air ambulance transfer, because she was “just not convinced” it was a medical emergency.

FULL STORY AT <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/sep/06/nauru-blocks-court-ordered-transfer-of-critically-ill-refugee-to-australia>

58. Crispin Hull: Christian prime ministers don't lock up children as 'deterrents'

Canberra Times

By Crispin Hull

1 September 2018 — 12:00am

Sniping at the Liberal Prime Minister will no doubt continue. The difference now will be that the sniping will come from the left or progressive side of the Liberal Party. The other difference is that Scott Morrison won't take any notice of it, unlike his predecessor, who made endless concessions to the far right.

The main policy discord will be over refugees and climate change.

You would have thought it would be a good time to end the indefinite imprisonment of these Australia's refugees, both practically and morally. On the practical side, Peter Dutton is no longer immigration minister. On the moral side, the new Prime Minister is a committed Pentecostal Christian.

FULL STORY AT <https://www.canberratimes.com.au/politics/federal/christian-prime-ministers-don-t-lock-up-children-as-deterrants-20180831-p500xu.html>

59. MEDIA RELEASE: Detainee suicides in Yongah Hill – negligence claims another life

Refugee Action Coalition

Sunday Sept 2, 2018

Ian Rintoul 0417 275 713

A Moroccan detainee has committed suicide in Yongah Hill detention centre outside Perth. The man was found in his cell at around 5.30pm Western Australia time.

The man has some history of mental distress – and is understood to have made two suicide attempts last week. He made another attempt cutting his wrists this morning (Sunday, 1 September) and was taken to hospital. But he was returned to Yongah Hill early this afternoon being told that “it was not serious”.

A few hours later he was found hanging from his bed.

FULL STORY AT <http://www.refugeeaction.org.au/?p=7068>

60. Police deployed to detention centre after self-harm incident and fire

ABC News

Posted September 03, 2018 05:51:35

Tensions are running high and additional police have been deployed at a West Australian detention centre, with a man in critical condition after a self-harm incident.

A detainee believed to be a 35-year-old Moroccan man self-harmed on Sunday at Yongah Hill Immigration Detention Centre.

He was resuscitated at the scene and transported to Northam Hospital, where he was in a critical condition.

A fire has been extinguished on the scene, but more police were deployed at the centre.

Refugee Action Coalition spokesman Ian Rintoul said the detainees were angry at how the situation had been handled.

FULL STORY AT <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2018-09-03/man-self-harms-at-immigration-detention-centre/10193920>

61. Protests and fires at Perth immigration detention centre

Disturbances broke out after the alleged attempted suicide of a young detainee

The Guardian

Helen Davidson

Mon 3 Sep 2018 11.52 AEST

Protests and fires broke out in a Perth immigration detention centre on Sunday night, after the alleged attempted suicide of a young man inside.

Australian Border Force confirmed a detainee of the Yongah Hill centre was taken to hospital for medical treatment, but would not provide further details.

Early reports that the man had died were incorrect.

The spokesman said there was a “disturbance by a small number of detainees” and WA police and fire department officers were on site.

The incident began some time before midnight and was ongoing until at least 4am EST, but ended by Monday morning with no reported injuries.

Footage filmed inside the centre and posted to social media showed a raging structural fire, and at least one person climbing over a high fence. Detainees can be heard saying: “Shouldn’t the fires be here, helping them out?”

FULL STORY AT <https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2018/sep/03/protests-and-fires-at-perth-immigration-detention-centre>

62. Yongah Hill unrest: confusion reigns three days after fire at detention centre

Home affairs says a man was treated in hospital but details about the fate of inmates and damage to the privately run site near Perth remain unclear

The Guardian

Helen Davidson

Wed 5 Sep 2018 11.59 AEST

Three days after fire tore through the Yongah Hill immigration detention centre, government officials and private contractors have refused to answer key questions about the incident and the treatment of detainees.

On Sunday evening ambulance services were called to the centre in Northam, east of Perth, after a young man attempted to take his own life, which sparked unrest, followed by a fire breaking out.

Fellow detainees, who believed he had died, alleged they had warned authorities he was distressed. He remains on life support in a Perth hospital.

Some hours later the fire started. Amid the confusion, chaos and lack of public information, rumours have swirled.

Detainees, family members and advocates have alleged emergency services and staff took at least one hour to respond to the fire, that there was no assistance evacuating detainees from the compound, and that no one received medical checks after the incident.

On Monday night and throughout Tuesday there were reports that the man, 22-year-old Saruuan Aljhelie had died, or that his life-support system was turned off.

FULL STORY AT <https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2018/sep/05/yongah-hill-unrest-confusion-reigns-three-days-after-fire-at-detention-centre>

63. Family demand answers over detainee's treatment at Yongah Hill

Rouke Walsh and Amelia Broun

The West Australian

Tuesday, 4 September 2018 6:17PM

The devastated family of an Iraqi man who is on life-support after a suicide bid has demanded answers about the mental health support he was provided at Yongah Hill Immigration Detention Centre.

Saruuan Aljhelie, 22, is in a critical condition at Royal Perth Hospital but was not expected to survive once doctors switched off his life-support.

Mr Aljhelie was taken to hospital after he tried to take his own life in his cell on Sunday night.

The incident sparked anger and protests from his friends at the facility. It escalated when they set light to mattresses, clothing and other property. Reports suggest the riot caused about \$500,000 damage.

It is believed Mr Aljhelie had self-harmed on Sunday morning but was released back into the detention centre just hours later.

FULL STORY AT <https://thewest.com.au/politics/immigration-policy/family-demand-answers-over-detainees-treatment-at-yongah-hill-ns-b88950433z>

64. Suicide in detention: family wants answers after Iraqi man dies after four attempts

When the 22-year-old Iraqi died at the Yongah Hill centre last week, it was after his fourth attempt at killing himself in custody

The Guardian

Helen Davidson

Tue 11 Sep 2018 08.19 AEST

When Sarwan Aljhelie died at the Yongah Hill immigration detention centre in Western Australia last week, it was after his fourth attempt at suicide. All four attempts were inside detention, where he had been for less than a year.

About three weeks earlier, shortly before his previous attempt, he had been transferred without warning or reason given, more than 3,000km away from his family and three children.

At that time, according to his family, instead of being placed on 24/7 watch, Aljhelie was returned from hospital to his room where guards goaded him about not doing it properly.

When he was found unresponsive in his room at Yongah Hill immigration detention centre a week later and taken to hospital, his family learned about it from other detainees. They say no one from the centre called them.

FULL STORY AT <https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2018/sep/11/sarwan-aljhelies-family-demand-answers-after-suicide-in-immigration-detention>

65. Refugee who attempted suicide in WA detention centre dies in hospital

Rumours Saruuan Aljhelie had already died earlier in the week sparked unrest in the Yongah Hill immigration detention centre

The Guardian

Helen Davidson

Thu 6 Sep 2018 16.42 AEST

A 22-year-old Iraqi refugee has died in hospital, days after he attempted to take his own life in his room at the Yongah Hill detention centre in Western Australia.

Saruan Aljhelie was taken from the centre by ambulance on Sunday night, and rumours that he was already dead sparked protests among other detainees and a fire which gutted an accommodation compound.

FULL STORY AT <https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2018/sep/06/refugee-who-attempted-suicide-in-wa-detention-centre-dies-in-hospital>

66. Serco guard at Western Australia immigration centre accused of sexual assault

Asylum seeker reports being assaulted by guard at Yongah Hill detention centre

The Guardian
Helen Davidson
Wed 19 Sep 2018 04.00 AEST

A Serco guard at an immigration detention centre near Perth has allegedly sexually assaulted a detainee, according to a complaint filed to Australian Border Force.

The detainee has said he was told by Serco management that his complaint was referred to the Australian federal police, and Guardian Australia has verified this claim, however neither the AFP nor Western Australia police appear to have received it.

There has also been at least one other separate complaint made to ABF of alleged sexual assault by another Serco emergency response team (ERT) officer at the Christmas Island detention centre.

According to the complaint filed by a male detainee at the Yongah Hill facility, east of Perth, the assault is alleged to have occurred on Sunday morning, while the detainee was picking up his medication.

"When I was exiting the medical dispensary, this Serco ERT guy followed me from the back side and pressed his genitals against my back, and then he used his right hand to touch my buttocks area from the back," the Yongah Hill complaint said.

"This caused me extreme emotional distress, fear and panic, and when I asked him why he do it, the ERT officials ganged up on me and I felt I was going to get physically assaulted."

FULL STORY AT <https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2018/sep/18/guard-at-western-australia-immigration-centre-accused-of-sexual-assault>

67. Immigration detainee penalised after reporting sexual assault by Serco guard

Labor says government should ensure staff at Western Australia's Yongah Hill are not 'abusing their power'

The Guardian
Helen Davidson
Fri 21 Sep 2018 04.00 AEST

An immigration detainee who alleged a Serco guard sexually assaulted him has had "incentive points" docked after Guardian Australia published details of the complaint.

In response to the allegations – which have apparently not been referred to law enforcement – Labor and the Greens have warned the government to ensure detention centre employees are not "abusing their power".

The detainee had accused a member of the Serco emergency response team at the Yongah Hill facility in Western Australia, of coming up behind him at the medical dispensary on Sunday and holding his genitals against him and grabbing his buttocks. He also alleged intimidatory behaviour following the incident, and filed two separate complaints.

Guardian Australia is aware that he has been told his complaint was referred to the Australian federal police but neither the AFP nor the Western Australian police appear to have received it.

FULL STORY AT <https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2018/sep/21/immigration-detainee-penalised-after-reporting-sexual-assault-by-serco-guard>

68. Alleged sexual assault of immigration detainee by guard referred to AFP

Federal police say they received referral about alleged assault at Western Australia's Yongah Hill three days after complaint made

The Guardian
Helen Davidson
Tue 25 Sep 2018 14.07 AEST

The Australian federal police has received a referral from Border Force about an alleged sexual assault inside the Yongah Hill immigration detention centre.

Guardian Australia reported last week a detainee had accused a Serco officer of sexually assaulting him at the Western Australian centre on the morning of Sunday 16 September.

He lodged a formal complaint the same afternoon, which he was told by management had been referred to the AFP. However, Guardian Australia revealed three days later, on Wednesday 19 September, that no referral had yet been made.

On Friday the detainee was informed by Border Force his complaint "along with all associated evidence" had been forwarded to the AFP on the Wednesday, the same day the story was published.

FULL STORY AT <https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2018/sep/25/alleged-sexual-assault-of-immigration-detainee-by-guard-referred-to-faf>

69. Home Affairs: Public servant submits 29 fake medical certificates in sick leave ploy

Sydney Morning Herald
By Nicole Hasham
7 September 2018 — 12:00am

Bureaucrats from the Department of Home Affairs have flagrantly rorted taxpayers by claiming fraudulent sick leave, including one who submitted 29 bogus medical certificates and another purportedly trying to save colleagues from contracting an exotic disease.

The misconduct in the department overseen by minister Peter Dutton is contained in internal department documents obtained by Fairfax Media under freedom of information laws.

The documents show an internal investigation found one staff member provided 29 fraudulent medical certificates between 2011 and 2017.

FULL STORY AT <https://www.smh.com.au/politics/federal/public-servant-submits-29-fake-medical-certificates-in-sick-leave-ploy-20180906-p5024s.html>