

SEVEN YEARS SINCE KEVIN RUDD'S 'PNG SOLUTION' SEVEN YEARS OF CRUELTY

On 19 July 2013 Kevin Rudd announced his so called 'PNG Solution'. Any asylum seeker arriving by boat after that day would be processed offshore on either Nauru or Manus Island (PNG) and would never be allowed to settle in Australia. If any were determined to be refugees they were supposed to be "resettled in Papua New Guinea".

In reality, around half the people who arrived by boat after 19 July 2013 were never taken to Manus or Nauru, but were taken to the mainland and have been resettled in Australia. But, for anyone who was taken to Nauru or Manus, the policy introduced by Rudd differed from John Howard and Jullia Gillard's offshore processing regimes in that there was no possibility of them ever being resettled in Australia.

Resettling refugees in desperately poor PNG (or Nauru) was never a viable solution nor seriously attempted. In reality the PNG Solution was a shameful attempt by Labor to win the upcoming 2013 election by agreeing with Tony Abbott's relentless right wing attacks on them for failing to have 'stopped the boats'. Labor lost the election and the conservatives took over the offshore detention policy.

Seven years on no refugees have been successfully settled in PNG. Currently about 380 refugees and asylum seekers still live in very precarious conditions on Nauru and PNG.

About 1500 have been brought to Australia for medical reasons since 2013. 1300 of them are living in Australia without work rights in 'community detention'. The other 200 people are living in closed detention in hotels such as Brisbane's Kangaroo Point hotel, or in immigration detention centres.

The vast majority of the people processed offshore have been found to be refugees but are denied the right to live permanently in Australia. They are meant to find a 'third country'. This is their punishment for arriving in Australia by boat.

But third country resettlement is very unlikely because most developed nations (just like Australia) are hostile to refugees and not about to take what are considered Australia's responsibility. The only third country to take significant numbers is the USA. This was part of a deal negotiated in November

2016, where Australia agreed to take some refugees the US didn't want, in exchange for the US taking up to 1250 from Nauru and Manus.

Since the USA deal was negotiated only about 770 people have been resettled in the USA. Even if the USA quota was filled, there will still be about 600 left in limbo. New Zealand has offered to take 150 a year but the Australian government rejects this saying it will be a backdoor into Australia.

Australian governments knew that PNG or third country resettlement was never a realistic option. Rather than face up to its obligations under UN refugee conventions, it made life in Australian-run offshore hellholes as brutal as possible in hope that the people would give up their claim for asylum, and be forced to return home, no matter how dangerous it was.

Many people imprisoned in PNG and Nauru have been broken by this cruel system. Thirteen people have died, some through suicide and some because of medical neglect. Self harm and suicide attempts are at chronic levels and many others have been broken mentally. After seven year it's time to end this cruelty and start welcoming refugees, and provide all (including those still on Manus and Nauru) with permanent protection in Australia. **FREE THE REFUGEES NOW!**

To stay up to date with planned actions join the Refugee Action Collective mail list at: www.rac-qld.org

Or like our facebook page "**Refugee Action Collective Queensland**" and regularly check 'events'.

You can support the blockade at the hotel at www.letthemhug.com

Sign the petition opposing the government taking away mobile phones at: https://www.change.org/o/national_justice_project_2



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