



Queenscliff Rural Australians for Refugees



February 12th, 2026

Submission on behalf of Queenscliff Rural Australians for Refugees re Senate Inquiry into offshore processing and resettlement arrangements.

My name is Susan Longmore. I am the Convener of Queenscliff Rural Australians for Refugees (RAR), a community group based on the Bellarine Peninsula in Victoria. Queenscliff RAR has a membership of over 600 people who mostly reside in Corangamite Electorate. Queenscliff RAR has advocated for refugees and people seeking asylum for over 20 years, including advocacy for one young man, detained in Nauru for 10 years before being transferred to mainland Australia for medical treatment.

Queenscliff RAR is opposed to offshore processing and the cruelty it inflicts on people seeking asylum. We are also concerned about alleged corruption in offshore contracts and the huge waste of public funds that would be better spent in Australia addressing social welfare and humanitarian issues in a beneficial and productive manner. Trust in governments is low - here is an opportunity to demonstrate, integrity, transparency and accountability.

Queenscliff RAR's concerns are:

1. Alleged corruption and governance failures in relation to offshore detention.

The Albanese government commissioned the former defence chief Dennis Richardson to conduct a review into allegations of corruption in Nauru in 2023. The Review¹ focused on Home Affairs' procurement and contract management policies and processes at that time, and a selective review of claims of historical mismanagement of regional processing procurement and contract arrangements.

The Review concluded that:

- coordination, communication and information flows within Home Affairs were inadequate, and communication from Home Affairs to AUSTRAC (Australian Transaction Reports and Analysis Centre) was inadequate.
- Proper due diligence was lacking when it came to contracts with relatively small companies with limited or no public profile, and where operations were to be in high-risk environments.
- Intelligence and other information, which was readily available, was not accessed. Consequently, integrity risks were not identified.

For example, Home Affairs has had contractual relationships with:

- a company whose owners were suspected, through the ownership of another company, of seeking to circumvent US sanctions against Iran, and with extensive suspicious money movements suggesting money laundering, bribery and other criminal activity.
- companies under investigation by the Australian Federal Police.
- a company whose CEO was being investigated for possible drugs and arms smuggling into Australia.
- and an enterprise suspected of corruption.²

¹ **Review of Integrity Concerns and Governance Arrangements for the Management of Regional Processing Administration by the Department of Home Affairs.** <https://www.pmc.gov.au/sites/default/files/resource/download/review-integrity-concerns-governance-arrangements-management-regional-processing-admin-department-home-affairs.pdf>

² **Review of Integrity Concerns and Governance Arrangements for the Management of Regional Processing Administration by the Department of Home Affairs. Page 5.** <https://www.pmc.gov.au/sites/default/files/resource/download/review-integrity-concerns-governance-arrangements-management-regional-processing-admin-department-home-affairs.pdf>

Serious allegations were revealed in a '60 Minutes' program aired in November 2025, detailing claims of corruption, misuse of public funds, and criminal infiltration within government contracts related to offshore processing. A senior Home Affairs official, Dr Derek Elias, risked jail to speak out about systemic rotting and graft in the Nauru detention system – detailing how millions in taxpayer funds were funnelled through secretive contracts to enrich private companies and corrupt officials.³

Millions of dollars were allegedly paid towards contract renewals that were not fit for purpose, with further evidence of overpayments for services no longer required or delivered. The '60 Minutes' program also revealed that members of the Finks Bikie gang had infiltrated the government's billion-dollar deal with Nauru through a security company involved in managing the contracts.⁴

The Government has identified numerous savings to assist budget repair – here is a perfect opportunity to save money and demonstrate integrity.

2. Offshore Resettlement Agreement and Offshore detention spending

In 2025, an Agreement was made by the Australian Government with the Nauruan Government for the transfer of migrants and refugees in the NZYQ cohort to Nauru. New laws allow deportations to occur without consideration of the consequences people would face, such as whether a person might die without proper medical care, be permanently separated from their families, or face persecution in Nauru. The law provides no requirement to assess health needs and no independent oversight of the deportation process.⁵

A Senate Hearing in September 2025 revealed that Australia would pay Nauru \$408 million when the first member of the cohort arrived on the island and up to \$70 million a year thereafter, depending on the number of people resettled.⁶

These payments are in addition to the \$13.35 billion spent since Australia's offshore detention centres were reopened in 2012, including the expansion of US private prison operator, Management and Training Corporation's (MTC) contract, which began in 2022, to now be over \$790 million. Refugee Council of Australia CEO Paul Power said the Senate Hearing revelations raised serious questions about the lack of accountability in Australia's offshore processing system.⁷

Queenscliff RAR considers the Agreement to be a shameful breach of Australia's values of fairness, equality and justice. In addition, the Australian Government's lack of transparency surrounding the Agreement has eroded public trust and hinders accountability.

3. Human Rights impacted by Offshore Processing

Australia's current policy is that anyone who arrives by boat and seeks asylum will be transferred to

³ Explosive whistleblower testimony exposes corruption, secrecy and cruelty at the heart of offshore detention. ASRC. 10/11/2025. <https://asrc.org.au/2025/11/10/explosive-whistleblower-testimony-exposes-corruption-secrecy-and-cruelty-at-the-heart-of-offshore-detention/>

⁴ Refugee Council calls for Parliamentary Inquiry into allegations of corruption and mismanagement in Offshore Processing. RCOA. 10/11/25. <https://www.refugeecouncil.org.au/refugee-council-calls-parliamentary-inquiry-offshore-processing/>

⁵ Media release 28/10/2025. ASRC. <https://asrc.org.au/2025/10/28/first-deportation-under-multi-billion-dollar-nauru-deal/>

⁶ Labor accused in Senate of turning blind eye to Nauru corruption allegations. ABC News. 26/11/2025. <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2025-11-26/senate-nauru-corruption-allegations/106055896>

⁷ Refugee Council calls for Parliamentary Inquiry into allegations of corruption and mismanagement in Offshore Processing. RCOA. 10/11/25. <https://www.refugeecouncil.org.au/refugee-council-calls-parliamentary-inquiry-offshore-processing/> <https://www.refugeecouncil.org.au/refugee-council-calls-parliamentary-inquiry-offshore-processing/>

Nauru for 'offshore processing'. Those found to be refugees are held on Nauru indefinitely and are denied resettlement in Australia in contravention of our obligations under the UN Refugee Convention. Previously there were some third country resettlement options through an agreement with the US, an agreement with NZ, and through the Canadian community sponsorship program. However, now there are no third country resettlement options and there appears to be no plan for resettlement of the approximately 105 refugees currently held on Nauru. This is effectively a life sentence on an island prison, with no opportunity for family reunification.

Approximately 27 men remain in Papua New Guinea (PNG), having been left to languish there with steadily deteriorating mental and physical health. They remain Australia's responsibility as Australia sent them there. The PNG government, while very ready to accept Australian Government money, is not concerned about the welfare of the refugees – as evidenced by their withdrawal of financial support for refugees in November 2023 and their failure over the last 12 years to establish a pathway for refugees to PNG citizenship.

The UN has been very clear that countries, including Australia, remain responsible for people they transfer to a third country for 'processing'. "*A State party cannot escape its human rights responsibility when outsourcing asylum processing to another State,*" said UN Human Rights Committee member Mahjoub El Haiba in a UNHCR media release in January 2025.⁸

Although the Senate Inquiry Committee will have particular reference to offshore processing and resettlement arrangements since 2022, it is not possible to fully understand these arrangements without considering the impacts of offshore processing over more than 13 years. The lack of integrity and corruption that exist today stem from prior to 2022.

Numerous reports from the UN Human Rights Council and reputable human rights organisations have documented the suffering of refugees incarcerated indefinitely in offshore processing in Nauru or PNG.

The UN Human Rights Committee in January 2025 released their findings and Decisions about two cases involving refugees and asylum seekers who had endured prolonged and arbitrary detention in the Regional Processing Centre in Nauru. The first case involved 24 minors who were detained for prolonged periods of time in Nauru. They were transferred to Nauru in 2014 and detained at the overcrowded Regional Processing Centre with insufficient water supply and sanitation, high temperatures and humidity, as well as inadequate healthcare. Almost all these minors suffered from deterioration of physical and mental well-being, including self-harm, depression, kidney problems, insomnia, headaches, memory problems and weight loss. Despite all but one of these minors being granted refugee status around September 2014, they remained detained in Nauru. The Committee called on Australia to provide adequate compensation to the victims and take steps to ensure that similar violations do not recur. Specifically, it urged a review of migration legislation and bilateral transfer agreements to align with international human rights standards.⁹

A member of Queenscliff RAR corresponded with and advocated for a young man who was detained for 10 years in Nauru. He was transferred there as a 17-year-old minor and suffered from deterioration of his physical and mental well-being, including self-harm -sewing his lips together, depression, kidney problems, insomnia, headaches, memory problems and weight loss. Twice he was brought to Australia for kidney treatment and once to Taiwan, but each time returned to Nauru. Eventually he was evacuated by medevac from Nauru to Australia where his kidney and health problems continued to be

⁸ **Australia responsible for arbitrary detention of asylum seekers in offshore facilities, UN Human Rights Committee finds. UNHCR. 09 January 2025**
<https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2025/01/australia-responsible-arbitrary-detention-asylum-seekers-offshore-facilities>

⁹ Ibid

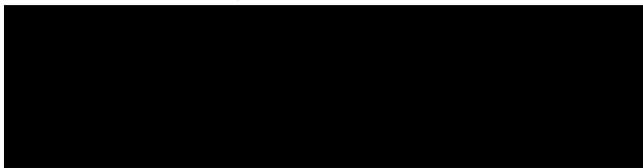
neglected by authorities.

Recommendations from Queenscliff RAR:

- Queenscliff RAR opposes offshore processing and indefinite detention of asylum seekers for the cruelty and unfairness of process that it inflicts on asylum seekers. People seeking asylum who arrive by boat should be processed in Australia in the same way that asylum seekers who arrive by plane are processed. If found, under a fair process, to be refugees, they should be provided with protection and resettlement in Australia. All the remaining refugees in PNG should be offered the option of being transferred to Australia where they and their families will be safe and can receive the medical care that they need. Those currently held on Nauru should all be brought to Australia (as the remainder of the 2013 cohort were in June 2023) and, if found to be refugees, resettled here.
- Queenscliff RAR abhors the immense financial expenditure wasted on offshore processing. Community-based programs while asylum claims are assessed are far more cost-effective than detention and with less harmful mental impacts. Money saved can be used for programs helping refugees to settle in and integrate, furthering social cohesion. In addition, money saved can be used in constructive programs leading to increased social housing, access to mental health programs etc. that have wide benefits for the Australian community.

Thank you for considering this submission made on behalf of Queenscliff Rural Australians for Refugees.

Yours sincerely,



Susan Longmore OAM,
Convener, Queenscliff Rural Australians for Refugees.

