

Senator Jana Stewart, Chair
Legal and Constitutional Affairs References Committee
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

9 February 2026

Dear Senator Stewart and Committee Members

Ballarat Rural Australians for Refugees (RAR) is pleased to make this submission regarding the **Inquiry into Offshore processing and resettlement arrangements** with particular reference to:

A. Australia's arrangements since 2022 with the Republic of Nauru, Papua New Guinea and other countries for offshore processing and resettlement programs, including:

- i. the payments made by the Australian Government to the primary contractors and subcontractors involved in offshore processing and resettlement programs,
 - ii. the payments made by the Australian Government to other third parties involved in offshore processing and resettlement programs,
 - iii. the outcomes and effect of payments made to primary contractors and subcontractors involved in offshore processing and resettlement programs and other relevant third parties, and
 - iv. the integrity of arrangements made for the delivery of services and value money for Australian taxpayers; and
- B. any other related matters.

Ballarat RAR has long welcomed and supported refugees in our community; and some of us have visited and supported people in detention in Melbourne on a regular ongoing basis for many years. Our group which includes over 80 people on our mailing list, has principally been concerned with the human aspects of government policy and have advocated for over 20 years for refugee justice.

Yours sincerely

(Mrs) Dale Dumpleton & (Mrs) Margaret O'Donnell (RAR Convenor)
On behalf Ballarat RAR

Our submission as it relates to placing people on Nauru (people seeking asylum and people termed non-citizens) contends the payments made by the government under the arrangements do not meet the Government's own procurement standards, that is to say: *a process that ensures value for money; is ethical, efficient, effective and economical; is transparent and accountable; is supportive of broader government objectives* (Reference Commonwealth Procurement Rules (CPR), 17 November 2025).

In accordance with the CPR, we find:

- The offshore processing and resettlement arrangements reflect a political approach without any rigour in terms of cost analysis or other ways of looking at the problem
- The arrangements do not consider the impact on the people of Nauru. The country already experiences food and water insecurity, relying on foreign aid. Climate change is causing

coastal flooding. A significant percentage of Nauruans live below the poverty line. Work opportunities are limited. (Reference Charlotte Zhou, 2022). Additionally, the only public hospital is small and unable to deal with major illnesses and/or complex cases. More people will put this and other services under strain

- The arrangement would appear to be 'set and forget' with no oversight and hence no accountability to the Australian public about monies spent
- The system of awarding contracts is opaque and with corruption raised in the media, the lack of oversight and likely financial improbity is cause for concern
- The massive financial outlay (\$70 million upfront and a further \$70 million x 30 years) for the small numbers of people cannot be considered value for money
- The approach then represents a poor use of taxpayer money, which could be better spent in other areas
- Many of those targeted in the so called NZYQ cohort are deeply connected to Australia through family and familial obligations. The purported purpose is unethical and does not justify the real harm it will cause to real people
- The arrangements pay no heed to Australia's international obligations to uphold the rights of refugees, and it offers no end to their trauma
- The lack of transparency around the deal with the Nauru Government & our concerns about due diligence.

Australia's refugee and detention systems have grown like topsy, and we see the arrangements as meeting short term political considerations without proper consideration of the future nor of people's basic human rights. This is borne out by a range of issues raised by others:

From Tampa to Nauru. Billion-dollar refugee deal to be scrutinised at last, Janet Pelly, Michael West Media 1 December 2025

- Details lack of transparency around the deal with the Nauru Government; concerns about due diligence; and relying on 'operational matters' to shut down accountability.

Millions of dollars in detention money went to Pacific politicians, Nick McKenzie, Michael Bachelard, Amelia Ballinger, The Sydney Morning Herald 23 July 2023

- Discusses suspect contracts and secret dealings.

Country Report, Immigration Detention in Australia, Turning Arbitrary Detention into a Global Brand, Global Detention Project, February 2022

- The project's findings confirm the secrecy and lack of transparency of offshore processing operations and highlights the catastrophic impacts on the physical and mental health of detainees, with high rates of self-harm, depression, anxiety and psychological disorders.

Cruel, costly and ineffective: The failure of offshore processing in Australia, Madeline Gleeson and Natasha Yacoub, Kaldor Centre, August 2021

- Finds offshore processing is not an effective deterrent to irregular maritime migration

- Discusses how conditions offshore, purposely engineered to serve as a deterrent for potential future unauthorised maritime arrivals has led to deaths and cases of serious physical and mental harm
- Contrary to the stated humanitarian aim of saving lives at sea this policy of indefinite offshore processing has caused extreme harm and destroyed people's lives.

With billions more allocated to immigration detention, it's another bleak year for refugees, Paul Braven, The Conversation, 13 May 2021

- Discusses the 2021 Budget highlighting the reduction in Australia's humanitarian program and the excessive spending to keep people offshore and forsaking Australia's responsibilities to find humane solutions for those offshore
- Looks at the maths – with 109 people then being held on Nauru and 130 in Papua New Guinea, Australia was spending almost \$3.4 million per person.

CONCLUSION

We have no confidence in the way these arrangements have been determined and enacted. They do not measure up to the Commonwealth Procurement Standards; lack proper due diligence; are not transparent; are a short-term fix; and cannot be considered fit for purpose.

Australia has a moral responsibility to find humane solutions for people. Claiming things are simple or straightforward as Tony Burke, Home Affairs Minister would like to suggest '*if a person has had their visa cancelled, they have to leave*' quoted in Saturday Paper, 6 September 2025), completely ignores the complexities that the NZYQ represent (stateless or found to be a refugee). They have served their time and banishing them to 30 years on a penal island is cruel and unethical.

Offshore processing in Nauru for people seeking asylum is not a solution. As the Kaldor paper highlights, offshore processing is not effective; it does not stop boat arrivals; it is costly and it is harmful and causes great suffering. For these reasons too putting people on Nauru is untenable.

We want an end to offshore processing and the resettlement deal with Nauru. We want people who were taken to Nauru and PNG to be brought to Australia.

Quote

'if a person has had their visa cancelled, they have to leave', Home Affairs Minister Tony Burke, quoted in Free-range fascists and a prison farm, Paul Bongiorno, The Saturday Paper, 6 September 2025

References

Commonwealth Procurement Rules 17 November 2025

<https://www.finance.gov.au/government/procurement/commonwealth-procurement-rules>

Nauru: The Phantom Island of the Pacific, Charlotte Zhou, The Science Survey, 25 July 2022