

Nevertheless, the majority of refugees and asylum seekers living in destitution in PNG and Nauru, have been there now since 2013 with little hope of resettlement. Despair over the hopelessness of their future has led to an ever increasing incidence of self harm and attempted suicide. In recent times their only guaranteed hope of resettlement has been on Nauru, in PNG or in Cambodia, all extremely poor and unwelcoming countries, each struggling to provide for their own people.

A recent deal with the US has seen a significant number relocated there; however it has not included many from a variety of specific countries and is shortly to come to an end. *AdsUp*, a citizen-funded program in Canada, has also resettled quite a number of refugees from offshore detention, but it is a slow one-by-one process.

Offshore detention costs billions of dollars every year. It would be ten times cheaper to allow asylum seekers to live within the Australian community while their claims were processed.

fact 6

Australia has one of the most paltry refugee intakes in the world

Australia is the world's 12th largest economy, yet we accept a miniscule proportion of the world's refugees. With a huge number of refugees, asylum seekers and displaced people in the world and this number continually increasing, Australia makes only a tiny number of visas available for refugees. Yes, Australia does resettle refugees through the UN resettlement program, behind the US and Canada, but UN resettlement assists less than 1% of the world's refugees.

fact 7

Children are still being held in detention

Children may now have been removed from the off-shore detention centres and returned to Australia, but most of them are still living in some form of community detention.

fact 8

Refugees make an enormous contribution to our society

By definition, refugees are survivors. They have survived because they have the courage, ingenuity and creativity to have done so – exactly the qualities we value.

Almost one million refugees and displaced people have settled in Australia since 1945. Many have gone on to do great things and have served us well in the fields of medicine, science, the arts, politics and more.

Refugees, who have fought for survival and overcome great traumas, have risked everything to make it to Australia. They express immense gratitude and dedication to their adoptive nation.

The challenge for Australia is to assist newly arrived refugees to process the experiences of their past and rebuild their lives. If we do this, we will reap the benefits of the qualities and experiences they bring to Australia.

Refugees have been good for Australia. Let's not forget it!

Refugees: THE FACTS



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www.refugeebuddies.org

fact 1

'Stopping the boats' has never saved lives

In the past, for people desperate to escape persecution and start a new life, people smugglers invariably provided their only escape route.

Any person who had arrived by boat since 2013 is now prevented from ever gaining resettlement in Australia and has been detained in indefinite offshore detention in Papua New Guinea or on Nauru, after the Australian Government did deals with the governments of both countries.

These asylum seekers have committed no crime nor have they been sentenced in any court of law. They are being held indefinitely against their will, even though most of them have been found to be genuine refugees.

It is a fundamental principle of human rights law that people cannot be punished for the reason of deterring others, but that is exactly what Australia is doing. Not only is it inhumane and hugely expensive, offshore detention serves absolutely no purpose. Asylum seeker numbers follow regional and global trends. Nothing will stop people in fear for their lives attempting to leave their homelands by any means available.

fact 2

Boat arrivals are genuine asylum seekers

Government statistics prove that asylum seekers who have risked their lives on a perilous boat journey are very likely to have genuine claims for protection. While around 45% of plane arrivals have been found to be refugees, the proportion for boat arrivals has been consistently above 90%.

fact 3

Boat arrivals have never presented a security risk

A terrorist threatening national security is more likely to have travelled by plane with a valid visa or false documentation than by leaky boat. It is improbable they would have chosen such a dangerous and difficult way to enter Australia, given that asylum seekers who arrive by boat without valid travel documents have always undergone far more rigorous security and identity checks than other entrants to Australia. There is no evidence that any boat arrival to Australia has ever been found to be a terrorist.

fact 4

Boat people are neither 'illegal' or 'queue jumpers'

The people who have arrived on our shores in the past to seek protection, without authorization and with no documents, or with false documents, are not 'illegal'. They are *asylum seekers* – a perfectly legitimate status under International Law. Many are forced to leave their countries in haste and are unable to access appropriate documentation. In many cases oppressive authorities actively prevent normal migration processes. Additionally, asylum seekers who have documents may be forced by people smugglers to destroy them to ensure that no incriminating paper trail remains.

There is no 'queue' in any meaningful sense of the word. The UN resettlement system works more like a lottery than a queue. Only a tiny proportion are registered with the UN and only a small number of those are eventually resettled. Given the number of displaced people globally, waiting in the imaginary queue would entail a wait time of more than 100 years!

fact 5

Offshore detention is cruel and completely unnecessary

Australia does not need harsh policies to secure its borders. No country in the world has greater control over its borders than Australia. While most countries share at least one border with another country and usually more, Australia is an island continent with vast surrounding seas. This natural barrier has always made irregular migration extremely difficult.

The US and the European Union are estimated to have millions of unauthorized immigrants living within their borders. In comparison, Australia has very few people living unlawfully in the country at any one time, mostly tourists and temporary migrants who have overstayed their visas.

Australia stands alone as a developed nation which imposes offshore detention on all boat arrivals and is roundly criticised internationally for this blatant breach of the *UN Refugee Convention*.

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