



AUSTRALIAN HIGH COMMISSION ISLAMABAD

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Press Release

Ninth group sent to PNG under Regional Settlement Arrangement (RSA)

The Department of Immigration and Citizenship (DIAC) today confirmed the transfer to Papua New Guinea (PNG) of a ninth group of 40 asylum seekers subject to the new Regional Settlement Arrangement.

Under the new arrangement - which was signed with PNG on July 19 - unauthorised maritime arrivals are sent to PNG for assessment and, if found to be refugees, will be settled there.

“People found not to be refugees may be returned to their home country or a country where they had a right of residence, or held in a transit facility,” a DIAC spokesman said.

The charter flight, with the group of 40 single adult men – consisting of ten Iranians, three Iraqis, 26 Lebanese and one Syrian – escorted by the Australian Federal Police, DIAC staff, interpreters and medical staff, departed Christmas Island last night.

The group arrived in Manus Province at approximately 9.30am and were transferred to the regional processing centre where they will be accommodated while their refugee claims are processed by the PNG Government.

There is no cap on the number of people who can be transferred to PNG and transfers will continue on a regular basis. Women, children and unaccompanied minors will be transferred in due course as appropriate arrangements are made.

Australia is working with PNG to expand the Manus Island regional processing centre, as well as exploring the construction of other regional processing centres in PNG.

“If people are paying thousands and thousands of dollars to a people smuggler, they are buying a ticket to a country other than Australia,” the spokesman added.

The total number of asylum seekers transferred to Manus Island under the RSA is 356 - consisting of 15 Afghans, 255 Iranians, 32 Pakistani, 5 Iraqis, and 49 other nationalities.

Media Enquiries: Mr Faizan Haq: 051 835 5422, 0300 854 7816
National Communications Centre in Australia (English only): +61 2 6264 2244
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