

## February 6 Refugee Action Coalition Media Alert

### Minister Playing Loose With Nauru Asylum and Self-Harm Figures

The attempt by the Immigration Minister and The Weekend Australian (February 6-7) to link self-harm on Nauru with family members being brought to Australia is another shameful effort to cover up the real conditions on Nauru.

The people who have been brought to Australia have been brought because there was no adequate medical treatment for their physical and mental damage available on Nauru.

Refugee and asylum seekers have been brought to Australia to give birth, for kidney and heart disease, burns, bullet wounds and other physical injuries suffered in their home countries, back injuries, cancer, sexual assault and rape victims.

“The Minister will not release figures about the any self-harm cases because he knows they would put the lie to any idea that self-harm is a major reason anyone has been brought from Nauru to Australia. Let alone the idea that family members have come with them. It is just not true,” said Ian Rintoul, spokesperson for the Refugee Action Coalition.

“Peter Dutton has also had another ‘Scott Morrison’ moment, suggesting that children were being coached into self-harm. Just as Scott Morrison had no evidence against Save the Children workers or anybody else, Peter Dutton has no evidence of his coaching allegations.”

The Minister’s concern that ‘self harm was a way of getting to Australia and appealing for residency’ is a complete fiction.

Similarly, it is absurd for Minister Dutton to suggest that the alternative to sending people to Nauru is to send them to their home countries.

“The Minister’s comments do reveal the motivation behind the government policy; to use confinement on Nauru to create insufferable conditions that could force asylum seekers to consider return to persecution,” said Rintoul.

“The Minister knows that refugees cannot be sent to their home country. Most of the 267 presently in Australia are still waiting for their refugee assessment more than two years after being on Nauru.”

One Somali refugee on Nauru told the Refugee Action Coalition, “Nauru is

Somalia. There is no safety here.”

The lack of medical facilities on Nauru still sees a large number of asylum seekers and refugees being taken for treatment in other countries.

"There really is no alternative for the 267 who are in Australia. The Minister should 'let them stay' where they can the care and protection they need."

Meanwhile on Nauru, Friday 5 February, the main supermarket near Anibare refused to serve refugees. Some refugees queued for most of the day, but still were not served, after being told that only Nauruans could buy goods.

For more information contact Ian Rintoul mob 0417 275 713