

2016 11 08 Refugee Action Coalition Media Release

Labor's Opposition To Lifetime Ban Exposes Third Country Myth - Now Bring Them Here

The Refugee Action Coalition has welcomed Labor's stand against Turnbull's attempt to impose a lifetime ban on asylum seekers and refugees sent to Nauru or Manus Island, ever entering Australia.

Turnbull's lifetime ban proposal was always a political stunt from a government that is sinking further in the opinion polls.

Labor's stance makes it almost certain that Turnbull's bill will be defeated. It is a welcome first sign that the days of bipartisan support for offshore detention are ending.

Turnbull's latest political stunt may fail but there is still no solution for the 1500 people imprisoned on Nauru and Manus.

Labor's opposition to the lifetime ban has now exposed the gaping hole at the end of offshore detention – that after three years and four months, there are no 'third countries' willing to resettle refugees from Manus or Nauru.

Peter Dutton has repeatedly claimed that the government is in negotiations with "third countries" – but no country is ever specified.

Dutton's big lie was starkly revealed when both the President of Nauru and the Foreign Minister of Papua New Guinea appealed for international help to resettle refugees at the recent UN summit on refugees.

He said in September that the government's first priority was resettling 'women and children' from Nauru – but discussion are always indeterminate and no country is ever specified.

Labor leader Bill Shorten called Turnbull's lifetime ban "ludicrous". It is just as ludicrous to insist on third country resettlement when there is none.

Rather than continue to call for third country resettlement, Labor must join the call for all asylum seekers and refugees to be brought to Australia.

Former Labor Prime Minister, Kevin Rudd, who declared in 2013 that no asylum seeker sent to Nauru and Manus Island would ever be resettled in Australia says that Labor only envisaged asylum seekers being held on Nauru for a year. It is now over three years.

"How much longer can Labor call for the Turnbull government to find a third country, when a third country does not exist," asked Ian Rintoul from the Refugee Action Coalition.

"There are over 320 people from Manus and Nauru already in the Australian community. It's time to end the uncertainty that hangs over their lives and allow them to resettle in Australia.

"It's time to end the offshore detention that has separated partners, brothers and sisters, parents and children and allow all asylum seekers and refugees to have a future free of persecution.

“The pretence that there are third countries is allowing the government to prolong the detention and uncertainty of all those being held Nauru and Manus Island. It is time to bring all asylum seekers to the Australia and resettle them in the Australian community.”

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