**Statement from the Refugee Council of Australia**

**Perverse punishment for people seeking asylum**

The government’s [recent proposal](http://refugeecouncil.us8.list-manage.com/track/click?u=c46bed9013729469dd31a4047&id=183a46fd6d&e=354f96a550) to permanently ban any adult who has sought asylum by boat from entering Australia would be ill-targeted, perverse punishment for people who came to Australia seeking safety.  Meanwhile, those people detained on Manus Island and Nauru continue to wait in limbo for a sustainable resettlement option.  Reports show that they have already been subjected to an ongoing pattern of abuse, which Amnesty International have found to be [tantamount to torture](http://refugeecouncil.us8.list-manage.com/track/click?u=c46bed9013729469dd31a4047&id=9563b7fc09&e=354f96a550).  Just last week, a [person was charged](http://refugeecouncil.us8.list-manage.com/track/click?u=c46bed9013729469dd31a4047&id=bc7a299cd5&e=354f96a550) with the indecent assault of a six year old child in Nauru, who has attempted to seek Australia's protection.

Refugee Council of Australia (RCOA) acting CEO Tim O’Connor said that ‘the Minister and the Prime Minister have gone to some lengths to suggest these proposed laws are targeted at the people smuggling trade, yet it is both perverse and cruel that the people who will be ill-targeted are those that have sought our safety and protection’.

Furthermore, the proposal shows that our leaders are, worryingly, moving Australia further away from engaging in sustainable solutions to global displacement. The announcement has caused great anxiety and also fails to address the precarious future of the 30,000 people living in the Australian community on bridging and temporary visas. There is an [ongoing mental health crisis](http://refugeecouncil.us8.list-manage1.com/track/click?u=c46bed9013729469dd31a4047&id=326e448d73&e=354f96a550) within this group, including an alarming spike in the number of suicides in recent months.