

Australian Refugee Policy and its Impacts on Pacific Island Countries

Brian Opeskin & Daniel Ghezgelbash

[https://doi.org/10.33318/jpacs.2016.36\(1\)-5](https://doi.org/10.33318/jpacs.2016.36(1)-5)

ABSTRACT

Refugees present an immense challenge globally but until recently Pacific Island Countries (PICs) have been relatively sheltered from this phenomenon. However, changes to Australia's border security and refugee policies in recent years have significant implications for the Pacific because of Australia's determination to prevent asylum seekers from arriving by boat in Australian territory. This article examines Australia's so-called 'Pacific Solution', which entails the transfer of asylum seekers to camps in Nauru and Papua New Guinea, where they are detained pending determination of their refugee status and ultimate resettlement. The social impacts of Australia's policies include the heightened tensions that arise from establishing large detention facilities in small island communities, and the social costs of resettling persons who are found to be refugees among poor local populations. Australia's policies also have other impacts on PICs. Australia's selective allocation of foreign aid and other funds make PICs vulnerable to pressure from its developed neighbour, and create the danger that Australia's perceived 'problem' with unauthorised boat arrivals is being shifted to acquiescent countries in the Pacific.

KEYWORDS: *asylum seekers, Australia, immigration detention, international aid, maritime arrivals, Nauru, Pacific Solution, Papua New Guinea, refugees, regional processing, resettlement.*