

MEDIA RELEASE

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Statement on Asylum Deal with PNG

The Australian Council for International Development (ACFID), Australia's peak council for humanitarian and international aid charities, does not support the Government's plan to deny resettlement to those asylum seekers who arrive in Australia by boat, instead relocating them to Papua New Guinea (PNG).

"We have previously registered our concern for the wellbeing of people in mandatory detention in PNG," said Marc Purcell, ACFID's Executive Director.

"We are unconvinced of the ability of Australia to support adequate, expanded asylum claims processing managed in PNG," he said.

"In particular, we note with alarm the recent reports of Salvation Army welfare workers regarding high rates of self-harm and inadequate medical facilities in the current processing centre on Manus Island," he said.

"There are serious questions about whether the current facility on Manus Island is adequate for housing 300 people, let alone 3000."

"We are also concerned about the potential for Australia's aid program to be skewed as a result of this plan," Mr Purcell said.

"We have seen reports about an altering of the aid program in PNG, and seek assurance that there will be no deferral or reduction of funds for key areas, including child and maternal health."

"48% of children in PNG are malnourished. There is a chronic shortage of skilled health workers, resulting in a high maternal death rate and a lack of crucial sexual and reproductive health services," he said. "Funding should not be redirected from programs which reach the poorest people and communities."

"ACFID calls on the Government to release the detail of how the aid program will be affected by this plan. We do not support diversions of aid funds to prop up domestic policy imperatives, and ask that the Government ensure aid funds are not channeled from other poor nations in order to support the plan."

"Aid is effective when it is predictable. The Government's plan could compromise current programs, as well as putting desperate people into an untenable situation," Mr Purcell concluded.



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ACFID unites Australia's non-government aid and international development organisations to strengthen their collective impact against poverty

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