



Operation Sovereign Borders

A new Australian Government was elected on 7 September 2013, with Tony Abbott appointed Prime Minister. The new Government has introduced a tough new policy for managing unauthorised maritime arrivals by boat to Australia called Operation Sovereign Borders (OSB).

What is this tough new policy ‘Operation Sovereign Borders’?

Operation Sovereign Borders is the Australian Government’s new military-led border security initiative to stop the boats, to prevent people risking their lives at sea in the hands of criminals, and to preserve the integrity of Australia’s immigration program.

How is the new policy different from the previous policy?

The agreed partnership with the Papua New Guinea (PNG) and Nauruan Governments remains active with unauthorised maritime arrivals being sent to PNG or Nauru for processing. The new policy introduces a rapid transfer process where asylum seekers are transferred to either PNG or Nauru within 48 hours of arrival in Australia. The new policy also includes the expansion of processing centres in both locations as well as the turning back of asylum seeker boats.

What are the arrangements between Australia, PNG and Nauru?

The agreement signed between Australia and PNG, and Australia and Nauru provides for all unauthorised maritime arrivals to be sent to either PNG or Nauru for processing and if found to be a refugee, settlement there.

People found not to be refugees will be returned to their home country or a country where they have a right of residence.

The New Rules

Australia is working with both PNG and Nauru to expand the Regional Processing Centres, as well as exploring locations for the construction of additional facilities. This is to allow for sufficient offshore processing capacity and to meet the 48 hour rapid transfer process.

Does the 48 hour transfer to PNG and Nauru apply to women and children?

Everyone who arrives unlawfully in Australia is subject to transfer to PNG and Nauru. Children and family groups are not exempt from transfer. Anyone who arrives in Australia by boat, without a visa, will not be settled there.

What about unaccompanied minors?

There are no exemptions to transfer to an offshore processing country. Unaccompanied minors who arrive unlawfully in Australia are subject to transfer to PNG or Nauru. Australian authorities are working closely with their PNG and Nauru counterparts to develop a framework of arrangements to cater for the needs of unaccompanied minors once they are transferred to a regional processing centre.



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Will the boats be told to turn around?

The Government in Australia has changed and so have the rules. If you come to Australia by boat without a visa you will be intercepted. You can be turned back or you will be quickly transferred to the country of PNG or Nauru for processing. You will never be settled in Australia.

The people smugglers told me that I would be eligible to settle in Australia?

Don't be deceived by the lies of people smugglers. They are only after your money. You risk losing everything, including your life, if you come to Australia by boat without a visa.

What if relatives are already in Australia? Is it any different if the relatives already have a visa?

It will not make a difference if people (including children, families or unaccompanied minors) have family in Australia. Everyone who arrives will be transferred to PNG or Nauru within 48 hours of arrival.

What will happen if asylum seekers make it to the mainland? Will they still be liable to be transferred to PNG or Nauru under these arrangements?

No matter where an asylum seeker arrives in Australia by boat, they will be transferred to PNG or Nauru.

What will happen to those people found not to be refugees?

Those who are found not to be refugees will be returned to their home country or to a country where they have right of residence.

How many people can be transferred to PNG or Nauru under the new arrangements?

There is no maximum number that can be transferred. Facilities in both countries are continually being expanded. There is no limit on the numbers that may be transferred or settled in PNG or Nauru under the new arrangement.

How do I obtain permanent residency in Australia or another country?

There is a correct process to follow to register a claim with the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) or International Organization for Migration (IOM).