

October 2025

Australia pays Nauru to keep non-citizens in 30 years exile

The Letter Kit is available to download at:

- <https://aran.net.au/resources/letter-writing/>



WHY IT IS IMPORTANT TO WRITE ABOUT THIS NOW:

Australia's relationship of convenience and 'dirty dealing' with Nauru continues with a new deal for non-citizens from Australia to be deported there; perpetuating Australia's human rights abuses even beyond the horrors of offshore detention and processing, and consigning people forcibly deported to a lifetime of marginalisation in Nauru.

In August 2025 Minister Tony Burke signed a Memorandum of Understanding with Nauru in which Australia agrees to pay Nauru \$480 million plus \$70 million per year to take people Australia rejects. These are people whose visas have been cancelled on 'character grounds'. Some have committed crimes and have fully served prison sentences. Many have been charged with only minor offences. None of these people can safely be returned to the countries they came from. Now Australia is paying off Nauru to offer them 30 year visas. Australia is taking no responsibility for what happens to them once they are in Nauru.

Send a message to your local MP, and Senators in your state, the Prime Minister and the Minister for Home Affairs - see contact details below

Included in this kit is the information you need to create your own letters or use the proformas

- Background notes prepared by ARAN's Letter Writing Network.
- Suggested points to mention in your letter or email to politicians
- Suggestion to also write a short letter to the Editor for newspapers, including your local paper
- Contact details for MPs and Senators

Personalised letters and emails are best –

You might like to use the **AIDA** principle in drafting your letter

- **A - Attention** - grab the recipient's attention. Say something positive about the reader that is directed towards the focus of your letter. Stimulate the recipient's curiosity
- **I - Interest & Information** - encourage the recipient to read on.
- **D - Desire** - Getting the reader to want to do what you are seeking - in their interest to do so.
- **A - Action** - inform the reader of the action you want them to take.

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The ARAN Letter Writing Network

Contact: [austrefugeenetwork@gmail.com](mailto:austrefugeenetwork@gmail.com)

## BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- In August 2025 Minister Tony Burke signed a Memorandum of Understanding with Nauru, in which Australia agrees to pay Nauru \$480 million plus \$70 million per year to take people which Australia rejects
- Also in August 2025 harsh legislation denying procedural fairness to some immigration detainees and stateless people seeking asylum was rapidly pushed through parliament. It has been called the Anti-Fairness Law because it denies people procedural fairness – the right to appeal through courts against decisions of government that affect them.
- These are people whose visas have been cancelled on ‘character grounds’. Some have committed crimes and have fully served prison sentences. Many have been charged with only minor offences. None of these people can safely be returned to the countries they came from. Now Australia is paying off Nauru to offer them 30 year visas. Australia is taking no responsibility for what happens to them once they are in Nauru.
- Refugees and people who have sought asylum in Australia can now be deported to Nauru where there are few opportunities to be integrated and make a new life for themselves in a small and tightly knit community. It amounts to exile for life to a tiny desert island. They will not be free to go anywhere else. We can assume that family reunion will be out of the question for these people. Medical facilities are limited. Some deportees will lose contact with families in Australia and be unable to support their dependent children or elderly or disabled relatives in Australia. Citizenship in Nauru requires payment of around \$160,000.
- The law is framed in a way which means it can apply to many more people than the NZYQ cohort. There have been reports that Nauru will soon issue about 280 visas for people Australia’s government wants to eject.
- Since 2001 detainees’ experiences on Nauru include severe mental and physical distress, physical assaults, sexual assaults and even suicide by fire. These have been reported in the Australian press and to members of parliament. UN bodies have been critical of Australia’s actions multiple times and Australia has been found to be in breach of its commitments to International Conventions by using offshore arrangements in third countries.
- Arrangements made in early 2025 for private security guards for Nauru associated with the Finks motorcycle gang have been supported by Australian funding
- There is no guarantee what Nauru will do in the future. The community there is worried about the prospective exiles. In the past there have been frighteningly aggressive and hostile actions towards detainees. The current president David Adeang said in a televised address “the long term goal remains the eventual repatriation of these individuals to their home countries should circumstances allow”. This is very concerning for those who fled danger to seek asylum in Australia – they will be at risk if returned to their home countries.
- A lack of transparency has been the hallmark of Australian governments’ dealings with Nauru. Agreements terms should be made public rather than kept secret
- This deal with Nauru is the latest development in the shameful and extremely harmful history of Australia ‘offshoring responsibility for accepting the claims of those who exercise their right to seek asylum in Australia.
- Australia needs to respect the human rights of all people if we are to be good neighbours to all the citizens in our “Pacific family” neighbourhood. Denying human rights will not win hearts and minds.
- **PM Albanese claims ‘we have been strong on borders but not weak on humanity.’ However, these arrangements with Nauru clearly disregard human rights and the PM’s words are manifestly untrue.**

## The Nauru story

The 21 sq km nation of Nauru sits on the tiny tip of an extinct volcano in the Pacific 40 km from the equator. Non-Nauruan persons or companies cannot buy or own land in Nauru. The coastal fringe is under threat of rising sea levels. Nauru's population is approx. 13,000. Most employment is in education, healthcare and the processing of asylum seekers. **Having few natural resources Nauru desperately needs external sources of income.** Nauru currently offers its citizenship for sale to approved applicants for \$160,000

**Nauruan Government:** *Issues of corruption and concerns about transparency and openness have been raised repeatedly. For instance, bribery allegations, questions about contracts and concerns over government influence in certain areas have been persistent.* [Chat GPT] Since 2016 Westpac (citing concerns about money laundering and terrorism financing) and Bendigo Bank have withdrawn from Nauru. An Australian law (March 2025) now guarantees provision of banking services to Nauru by the Commonwealth Bank of Australia.

**Brief History:** Australia after World War 1 was given trustee control over Nauru with the UK and NZ. In 20<sup>th</sup> century 70-80% of the island of Nauru was mined by Australia, New Zealand and Britain for phosphate deposits for crop fertilisation. Now China wants more influence in the Pacific, but Australia wants to maintain it.

**1968:** Nauru gained nation status.

**1989:** Nauru took Australia, Britain and New Zealand to the **International Court of Justice** wanting compensation for mining damage. **Australia settled out of court paying \$57million immediately and annual instalments of 2.5 million over 20 years.**

**1990s:** Nauru became a tax haven and an international money laundering centre.

**2001:** The Howard Government negotiated with Nauru to open the Nauru Regional Processing Centre. The Tampa refugees were sent there. In 2003 a hunger strike by detainees.

**2014:** Nauru increased the cost of journalist visas from \$200 to \$8000. **Withdrawal or denial of visas became a secrecy instrument.** eg Australian Geoffrey Eames, then Nauru's Chief Justice, was refused re-entry.

**Australia's Human Rights Commission** in *The Forgotten Children* report (2014) exposed the

shocking mental and physical effects on detained women and children. In 2016 **The Nauru Files** were made public: over 2,000 reports made by RPC guards, caseworkers and teachers detailing incidents involving self harm, child abuse, assaults, and sexual assaults.

**2017:** The **UN Human Rights Committee** said Australia had violated the **International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights** through arbitrary detention of refugees and asylum seekers on Manus & Nauru.

**June 2023:** All but 2 refugees were evacuated from Nauru to Australia.

**Sept 2023:** People seeking asylum apprehended at sea sent to Nauru for 'offshore processing'. Currently there are around 100 people on Nauru.

**November 2023:** In its "NZZYQ" decision - **Australia's own High Court found it was unconstitutional and unlawful to detain people indefinitely.**

**Late 2024:** Labor Government passed a Migration Amendment allowing forced removals to willing countries-eg Nauru, even for people who have refugee status. The new law included possibility of 1 to-5 years' imprisonment if people refused to cooperate with their own deportation

**In 2025 the United Nations Human Rights Committee** found Australia had breached its obligations under the **International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights:** We could NOT legally offload responsibility for detainees onto Nauru. Also, 24 unaccompanied minors sent offshore were denied the right to challenge the legality of their detention – they were denied procedural fairness.

Legal challenges to forced deportations successful in frustrating deportations to Nauru.

In August make those powers stronger by removing people's right to natural justice (or fair decision making) when the government uses their new powers to make arrangements with other countries to accept people, and to force people to cooperate with their own deportation.

**29 August 2025:** Minister Tony Burke signed a **Memorandum of Understanding with Nauru. Australia agrees to pay Nauru \$480 million plus \$70 million per year to take people Australia rejects.**

**4 September 2025:** **Migration Amendment (2025 Measures 1)** passed, denying natural justice and the right to legal appeal for people who are at risk of deportation. People may be sent to Nauru by Australia even if it places their life at risk.

**SAMPLE LETTER to POLITICIANS**    *Remember to tweak this letter to make it your own – and make necessary changes if sending to non-Labor politicians*

Dear Minister/Senator/MP

Labor came to power promising “fairness” and protection for the vulnerable. But when it comes to the treatment of people with refugee status and other people seeking asylum it appears that a different set of values applies. The recent ill thought-out amendment to the Migration Act allowing the forced deportation of “undesirable immigrants” to Nauru not only denies those individuals basic human rights and natural justice but also injures our already fragile relationship with our “Pacific Family”.

When the High Court ruled in 2023 that it is unconstitutional to keep people in indefinite detention in Australia and 354 “non citizens” were released into the community, the Labor government’s answer to this was to send perceived “problems” off shore to Nauru in rushed legislation that does not consider the impact both on the individuals involved and on Nauruans. Under this new legislation individuals are deprived of basic procedural rights and can be deported without warning without the right to appeal. A 30 year visa to stay on Nauru without travel papers is tantamount to indefinite detention.

This legislation will have a catastrophic impact on individuals permanently exiled to a third country without recourse to legal appeal. Many have lived in Australia for long enough to have built family and community connections. Some have major health issues that cannot be addressed in the small island nation. There are no guarantees in the law to protect them from being persecuted or to allow them to have contact with their family.

Nauru has long been the subject of colonial exploitation. An upfront payment of \$408m plus \$70m each year is a tempting offer to a struggling economy. Well documented human rights violations and corruption in the past, as well as UN reports that conditions are not up to standard, have not concerned the Labor government and they have pushed ahead with an “out of sight, out of mind” approach. Our Prime Minister is currently seeking to strengthen Australia’s relationship with our Pacific neighbours. However, the continued use of Nauru as a dumping ground for vulnerable people denies the values we claim to hold.

What is the future for the people who are banished? Given the lack of employment opportunities and health facilities, what plans have been made to facilitate their integration? These are not just questions for Nauru to solve. They should have been carefully considered before their exile was being presented to parliament as Australia’s solution.

I call on the Australian Government to repeal this legislation and to grant procedural fairness that is the right of all citizens in a functioning democracy to those affected by this bill.

Yours sincerely,

*Name and address*

## IDEAS for LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Consider using material from the background provided here – and also points from the sample letter below. It could be useful to mention the Economic Roundtable, and the wastefulness of have people willing and able to work who are prevented from doing so for no useful reason.

### Tips for writing letters to the Editor:

- Be clear and concise about the issue you are raising (you will need to choose just one or two key points, as you don't have the space to fully explain a complex situation)
- It's helpful if you can link to something topical in the news
- Assume that the readers don't know much – if anything about the issue
- Make it clear what you are concerned/outraged about
- Make it clear what you think should happen
- Human rights are important for all – including non-citizens

You'll find more useful tips here: <https://www.climatecouncil.org.au/how-write-effective-letter-editor/> (produced by the Climate Council) and here: <https://www.naeyc.org/our-work/public-policy-advocacy/letter-editor-template>

Some useful tips here also: [https://www.raisetherate.org.au/letter\\_to\\_the\\_editor](https://www.raisetherate.org.au/letter_to_the_editor)

## POLITICIANS to write to: CONTACT DETAILS:

### If posting letters:

Prime Minister: PO Box 6022, Parliament House, CANBERRA ACT 2600

Minister Tony Burke: PO Box 6022, Parliament House, CANBERRA ACT 2600

Senators: PO Box 6100, Parliament House, CANBERRA ACT 2600

Your local MP – find their electoral office address at [Search for individual MPs & Senators here](#)

### Sending your letter by email:

- Prime Minister - use the contact form: <https://www.pm.gov.au/contact-your-pm>
- Minister Tony Burke: [tony.burke.mp@aph.gov.au](mailto:tony.burke.mp@aph.gov.au)
- To find details for individual MPs and Senators use this link to [Search for individual MPs & Senators on the Parliament House website](#)
- You might find this listing helpful: [Listing of all MPs and Senators Sept 2025](#). Please download the spreadsheet if you want to sort etc for your own use. This spreadsheet was updated in Sept 2025. If you find any errors, please email [info@refugeeadvocacynetwork.org.au](mailto:info@refugeeadvocacynetwork.org.au) and we'll make corrections.

### Senators by State

ACT: ALP: [senator.katy.gallagher@aph.gov.au](mailto:senator.katy.gallagher@aph.gov.au);

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