

## **Peter Dutton calls refugees who rejected US offer ‘not genuine’**

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MP warns 14,000 seekers waiting to board boats  
Asylum seeker kids to leave by end of year

MORE than 70 asylum seekers in detention centres on Nauru have knocked back an offer to resettle in the United States when they heard they would have to work and would not receive welfare.

Home Affairs Minister Peter Dutton said the refusal by a sizeable number of people on Nauru to resettle in the US indicated they were not genuine refugees.

In an interview with The Daily Telegraph, Mr Dutton also warned that resettling refugees from Nauru in New Zealand would risk restarting the smuggling trade to Australia — where they would end up in Nauru, regardless of whether they have children.



Home Affairs Minister Peter Dutton has indicated refugees who did not want to be resettled in the US are not genuine. Picture: Kym Smith

“I think now is exactly the wrong time to be sending people to New Zealand because we don’t have Labor’s agreement on the lifetime ban, and it’s doubtful they would support it, and secondly, there’s too much activity and too much speculation around which means NZ would be a pull factor,” he said.

Prime Minister Scott Morrison has said he would support sending asylum seekers to New Zealand if there is a lifetime ban on them returning to Australia.



Old concrete workers flats on Nauru. Picture: Lyndon Mechielsen



More children could end up in detention on Nauru. Picture: Supplied

But, even if the lifetime ban were in place, Mr Dutton said it could encourage people-smugglers to restart the boats.

And this would take the Australian government back to square one and lead to the possibility of more children ending up in detention on Nauru, Mr Dutton said.

“It’s the policy of both Liberal and Labor that if a boat arrives tomorrow, including with children, they will be going directly to Nauru,” he said.

In total, 71 refugees in detention on Nauru have either refused or withdrawn from resettlement in the United States over the past 18 months, while 439 have accepted the offer out of a total of 1250 places.



Last year a number of asylum seekers left Manus Island for the United States.  
Picture: Brian Cassey

Mr Dutton said the decision by people on Nauru to reject a move to the United States showed they were more likely to be economic refugees and were not truly desperate for a safe home. “I would say millions of refugees have gone to the US and may have died trying because it’s the land of opportunity and one of the greatest countries in the world,” he said. “People who have refused to take a place in the US aren’t genuine (refugees).”

“Reports have come back to people on Nauru that it’s all a bit financially tight there because you have to get a job and because there’s no welfare there.”

The Morrison government has indicated it plans to get all children off Nauru by Christmas this year.

