

**Australia, New Zealand,
Papua New Guinea and the South Pacific**

Part I: Executive Committee Summary

(a) Context and Beneficiary Populations

UNHCR's Regional Office in Canberra covers Australia, New Zealand, and thirteen States in the South Pacific; Papua New Guinea (PNG), the Northern Mariana Islands, the Cook Islands, the Federated States of Micronesia, Fiji, Kiribati, Nauru, Niue, the Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu, Vanuatu and Western Samoa. The UNHCR office in Auckland was officially closed in 2001. UNHCR expects to re-establish a presence in PNG in late 2002.

The presence and involvement of UNHCR in Australia and New Zealand is essentially due to these countries' significant contributions to refugee protection, resettlement and fund raising. Both countries are also influential in the South Pacific region and beyond. Australia in particular is at the forefront in regional efforts to combat people smuggling and trafficking. Several years of intense legislative activity have curtailed the previously generous treatment of asylum-seekers and refugees, particularly those who arrive onshore. Furthermore, the 'Pacific Solution', which saw the interception of asylum-seekers from August 2001 (Tampa) onwards and their subsequent transfer to Nauru and PNG, significantly increased the need for UNHCR monitoring and involvement in the region.

At the February 2001 Bali Conference on People Smuggling, countries in the region, including Australia reiterated their commitment to refugee protection but highlighted the need for the Asia-Pacific region to work together to combat related trans-national crime. UNHCR's participation focused on ensuring that refugee protection principles were upheld. UNHCR has been developing a concept paper on a Comprehensive Approach to Secondary Movements in the Asia – Pacific Region, which seeks to respond to the legitimate concerns of governments in regard to irregular movements and smuggling of refugees and asylum seekers.

UNHCR's involvement in PNG focuses on monitoring possible refugee influxes and capacity-building, especially through promoting refugee law and training of PNG Government officials and NGOs. As part of this engagement, UNHCR has been involved in assisting local authorities undertake refugee status determination of several hundred West Papuans (Indonesia). With the establishment of an office in Port Moresby, UNHCR will be in a better position to monitor the situation of asylum seekers entering PNG and to provide technical assistance to local authorities.

UNHCR's presence in the South Pacific was fundamentally altered by the 'Pacific Solution', which saw UNHCR assisting in refugee status determination in Nauru. The decision of the Office to conduct refugee status determination and resettlement processing of some 530 asylum seekers in Nauru was on an exceptional basis, and due to the compelling nature of the case. UNHCR's involvement in Nauru will end in late 2002.

Australia and New Zealand (RO Canberra)

The overriding objective will be to maintain the protection of refugees and asylum-seekers in a rapidly developing policy environment. Specific objectives in support of this overriding objective will be, in consultation with governments and non-governmental organisations where appropriate, to:

1. Monitor policy and legislative developments on asylum and reception issues and provide advice to governments to ensure the rights of refugees and asylum seekers are adequately taken into account;
2. Ensure that resettlement programmes in the region reflect UNHCR needs and policies and are maintained or increased;
3. Increase public support for refugees through advocacy, public information, public awareness and private sector fund raising activities; and,
4. Maintain or increase governmental funding of UNHCR and maximise private sector fundraising opportunities.

Papua New Guinea and South Pacific (Canberra and Port Moresby):

The main objectives for UNHCR's activities in PNG and the South Pacific will be to:

1. Assist PNG build a local capacity for refugee status determination;
2. Monitor developments in the region, including those which may cause refugee flows to PNG and elsewhere in the South Pacific;
3. Promote accession to and implementation of the Refugee Convention as well as the enactment of national refugee law; and,
4. Increase awareness of and support for refugees.

Australia and New Zealand:

Australia and New Zealand are parties to the Refugee Convention, members of UNHCR's Executive Committee and valuable supporters of activities in the Asia-Pacific region.

UNHCR's role in Australia and New Zealand continues to be advisory in nature, employing mechanisms such as consultation, liaison, refugee law training and promotion of UNHCR's resettlement needs and priorities. UNHCR also undertakes public information activities to enhance the public support and commitment of both countries to meet their international obligations, and to continue to be allies in helping UNHCR protect and assist refugees world-wide.

Australia and New Zealand remain generous resettlement countries, maintaining their allocation of 4,000 and 750 refugee resettlement places respectively for a number of years. Both countries have indicated their resettlement programs may increase in 2003. In Australia, this is dependent on the number of persons arriving on-shore. Australian policy limiting family reunification for refugees who were irregular movers continues to be of concern to UNHCR as does the continued mandatory detention regime for unauthorised arrivals, including asylum seekers. The end of the first three-year period initiated at the end of 1999 is due in 2003 for Temporary Protection Visas and may involve increased engagement of UNHCR with the Government on issues of return, particularly with regard to Afghanistan.

UNHCR closed its office in New Zealand in late 2001 and re-deployed the post to the Regional Office in Canberra. It is important that RO Canberra maintains constructive working relations with relevant New Zealand parties both within and outside Government through regular and close consultation. The office will continue to foster and enhance a positive attitude towards UNHCR, refugees and asylum-seekers in both Australia and New Zealand.

Papua New Guinea and the South Pacific:

Papua New Guinea is a State party to both the 1951 and its 1967 Protocol. Papua New Guinea has hosted a significant number of refugees from West Papua since 1985 (at times up to 10,000). UNHCR assisted the Government with the emergency as well as the care and maintenance of these refugees for more than a decade. Thereafter, UNHCR focused on the transition to local integration and voluntary repatriation of these persons. This goal was largely achieved in 2000 and 2001. In 2001 UNHCR also assisted local authorities and churches in providing material assistance to almost 400 West Papuans who fled West Papua/Irian Jaya, late 2000.

UNHCR is currently working to develop the national capacity of the Papua New Guinea Government (primarily through the Immigration department) to receive and determine the status of asylum seekers under Convention criteria. This facility would assist not only future arrivals from West Papua, but also from elsewhere in the world, as Papua New Guinea may become a "transit country" for asylum seekers. UNHCR's objective will continue to be to ensure that Papua New Guinea fulfils its obligations under the Refugee Convention.

Four other countries of the South Pacific, Fiji, Samoa, Solomon Islands, and Tuvalu, are also States parties to both the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees of Refugees (1951) and the 1967 Protocol. UNHCR has no office or staff in the South Pacific and the program is served by UNHCR Canberra staff. UNHCR's role will be to continue to promote accession to and implementation of the Refugee Convention and to ensure that respect for fundamental refugee law is maintained.

(b) Selected Programme Goals and Objectives

Name of Beneficiary Population / Theme: Australia and New Zealand.	
Goal: Monitor policy and legislative developments on asylum and reception issues and provide advice to Governments to ensure the rights of refugees and asylum-seekers are adequately taken into account.	
Principal Objectives	Outputs
<ul style="list-style-type: none">To engage the Government consistently on policy and legislative developments to ensure UNHCR views are reflected	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Provide training, advice and information to Government officials, such as immigration officials, legislators, etc. on refugee law and related international instruments.Increase contacts and advocacy with all Government interlocutors.
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Systematic review of the policy of detention and its application are undertaken through visits and monitoring of these centres, including those located in Christmas Island, Papua New Guinea and Nauru to ensure that detained asylum seekers are treated in accordance with international standards.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Enlist the support of influential groups, including non-governmental organisations, to influence Government action.Support and undertake promotion and training activities for non-governmental organisations and other sectors dealing with human rights and refugee matters and establish a network to share information on violation of refugee rights.A framework of UNHCR's role and schedule in monitoring and visiting detention centres is formulated. Visit detention centres regularlyIn Australia, UNHCR's recommendation to implement an alternative detention model is being taken into account by the Government.
Goal: Resettlement in the region reflects UNHCR needs and policies and resettlement programs, financial contributions, and regional influence are maintained or increased.	
Principal Objectives	Outputs
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Resettlement in Australia and New Zealand reflects UNHCR policies, needs and priorities.Size of refugee resettlement programs are maintained or increased.Cases are processed expeditiously.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Monitor legislation and policy.Regularly advise and consult with other governments, NGOs, and other UNHCR offices on UNHCR resettlement needs and priorities.Engage in training of NGOs and Government Officials.Utilise compelling individual cases to effect change.
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Refugees are reunited with their immediate family.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Advocate for change in current Australian policy.Use compelling individual cases.
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Cases processed under the 'Pacific Solution' do not utilise UNHCR resettlement places.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Monitor Australian practice.Liase closely with headquarters.
Name of Beneficiary Population / Theme: PI and Fund Raising Activities	
Goal: Increase public support for refugees through advocacy, public information, public awareness and private sector fund raising activities.	
Principal Objectives	Outputs
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Increase public awareness of refugee issues.Increase support for refugees.Raise the public profile of the work and role of UNHCR.Informed public supportive of refugees issues.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Develop and give well-targeted lectures and presentations.Respond effectively to public and media enquiries.Cultivate useful media contacts and place accurate information in the media.Publish high quality Newsletter with wide distribution.Brochures, posters and other IP materials targeting general public are produced and distributed.