

IMMIGRATION & CITIZENSHIP AUTHORITY

MEDIA RELEASE

Support and Services provided in Immigration Detention

The PNG Immigration and Citizenship Authority (ICA) continues to progress the Prime Minister's direction to end regional processing in Manus Province.

PNG's Chief Migration Officer, Mr Solomon Kantha in response to questions raised regarding the newly opened Bomana Immigration Centre (BIC) said 'there has been considerable speculation regarding the new Centre and I wish to correct the record. The Centre is a stand-alone, purpose-built facility and is in no way an annex of any other facility. The operationalization of the BIC is a significant step in the operational capabilities of PNG ICA. While it is correct that the first persons detained at the Centre are failed asylum seekers who refuse to depart PNG – we will use the BIC to ensure any individual found in breach of our immigration laws is available for removal or voluntary departure'.

Mr Kantha said 'the term unlawful non-citizen applies to anyone without a valid visa that does not have a legal right to remain in PNG. Those unlawful non-citizens currently detained in the BIC are failed asylum seekers, whose protection claims have been fully assessed and it has been established that they are not owed protection. These people were actively encouraged to depart PNG voluntarily and detention occurred only after all efforts were exhausted. The individuals themselves are free to depart as soon as they are issued with travel documents for re-entry into their countries of citizenship'.

Mr Kantha said 'ICA takes the welfare and support of detainees very seriously, with a high standard of health, security and support services provided to those in the Centre. Detainees have access to recreation facilities, multi-faith rooms, unstructured activities and are provided three meals daily. Detainees can receive professional and social visits and can also access telephone communication. We should be clear that the purpose of immigration detention is to facilitate departure and removal. Our expectation is that detainees must engage with arrangements to facilitate their departure from PNG. Priority is afforded to visits that support departure from PNG. Personal mobile devices are a controlled item and are not permitted within the secure Immigration Centre environment'.

Detailing the health care for those at the Centre, Mr Kantha said 'primary health care is provided on site by medical professionals and where required, detainees are taken off site for specialist health care. In all circumstances, ICA relies on the advice of medical professionals and treating doctors located here in Papua New Guinea. ICA continues to facilitate medical evacuations where our health service provider advises that treatment cannot be delivered in Papua New Guinea. Once an individual is detained, they are expected to depart to a location where they have a lawful right of entry and stay.

Mr Kantha concluded by saying 'to evidence our flexible approach, I must highlight that there are failed asylum seekers that remain within the PNG community. It has always been ICA's position that immigration detention is used as a measure of last resort. However, we are obliged to consider this when all other avenues fail. The Migration Act allows ICA to remain flexible with those who make efforts to abide by PNG law and there is no reason to detain anyone cooperating with voluntary departure. To these individuals, I encourage you to speak with ICA regarding the financial assistance package that is available to you, to start making arrangements to depart PNG and to move on with your life'.