

## *MEDIA RELEASE – 25.09.2014*

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### **Cambodian deal is back to front**

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The resettlement deal in Cambodia will fail for the same reasons it has in Papua and New Guinea, according to the Australian Association of Social Workers (AASW).

Cambodia is simply too poor and without sufficient social infrastructure such as schools and health centres to manage resettlement of significant numbers of refugees. Effective resettlement also requires specialised resettlement services such as language classes and case management services that assist refugees to integrate into a new society. Australia has a long history of successfully working in this way. Cambodia does not. No matter how many millions the Australian Government pours into the deal, they will not be able to surmount these difficulties.

Though the Cambodian deal may well have the effect of removing 1,000 asylum seekers from Nauru by sending them to Cambodia, the government will not be able to escape negative publicity when refugees begin to experience serious difficulties and setbacks.

The government should now be reinvigorating the Bali process and focusing on a truly regional solution to deal with irregular migration routes through South East Asia. The number of refugees and asylum seekers continues to increase exponentially due to war and repressive governments. While people have little hope that their claims for refugee status will be processed promptly, people will continue to use irregular migration routes.

President of the AASW Professor Karen Healy says that “Current policies with regard to asylum seekers are obscenely expensive, inhuman and make Australia look foolish in the region.”

“Australia as a priority needs to

1. Lift the number of refugees that it accepts and
2. Work with the other countries to find a truly regional solution to irregular migration routes.

“Otherwise, the Cambodian deal is a ‘quick-fix’ that will quickly become a problem for the government.”

The AASW represents the social work profession in Australia and the people the profession serves, many of whom work with refugees and asylum seekers.

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