



# UNHCR

United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees  
Haut Commissariat des Nations Unies pour les réfugiés

UNHCR Representation  
Regional Office for Australia, New Zealand,  
Papua New Guinea and the South Pacific  
15 Hunter Street  
Yarralumla ACT 2600  
Australia

Tel: (02) 61201104  
Fax: (02) 62736822  
Email: [rummery@unhcr.ch](mailto:rummery@unhcr.ch)

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## **UNHCR welcomes new bridging visa for long-term detainees**

UNHCR Regional Representative Mr Neill Wright today welcomed the announcement of new measures to allow the release of some long-term immigration detainees into the community. The move was welcomed in broader human rights terms, and not just for the benefits it may bring to persons of UNHCR's mandated concern.

Mr Wright said the new *Removal Pending Bridging Visa* was a positive step in giving the Minister more flexibility to end the long-term detention of people who, while not recognised as refugees, cannot in the short-term be returned to their home countries for security or other reasons.

"While UNHCR recognises that people who have had access to a fair asylum procedure and have been found not to be refugees can be repatriated, there are instances where this is not possible often for security reasons, such as the current situation in Iraq. UNHCR encourages states to provide some form of temporary stay until it is safe for people to be returned," said Wright.

"UNHCR will continue to provide the Australian Government with Country of Origin Information to allow it to assess conditions in the home countries of people in immigration detention, and whether or not it is safe for people to be returned.

"I also welcome the access to important social support benefits the new visa category will provide, including work rights, Medicare, rent assistance, education, and trauma counselling," said Mr Wright.

*For more information on UNHCR's Guidelines on Detention visit  
[www.unhcr.org.au/protlegal](http://www.unhcr.org.au/protlegal)*