No-frills processing centres will be a rude shock

Unfit for habitation

ASYLUM seekers sent from their initial housing in an Australian detention centre to Nauru and Manus Island are in for a shock.

News Limited has been told the up to 2100 people sent to the offshore processing centres can expect a no-frills existence while their refugee claims are processed.

Yoga, beauty therapy classes, pilates and movie nights at Christmas Island detention centres are likely to be a distant memory for those sent thousands of kilometres from Australia to hot, humid outposts.

Instead, asylum seekers face dilapidated demountable buildings, weeds, sapping heat and, at Manus Island, buildings overrun with termites.

And in the remote PNG location asylum seekers face the threat of malaria with a spokesman for immigration, Minister Chris Bowen, yesterday saying the government planned to prevent asylum seekers becoming ill.

A first look inside the processing camp yesterday, eight years after it was mothballed by the Howard Government, showed it was in appalling condition.

Most of the 30-40 demountable buildings are termite ridden, trees and debris cover the ground while surrounding roads running through jungle are potholed.

Chicken wire rims the camp and even the toilets were not connected to plumbing.

Nauru and Manus Island will be classed as processing centres, not detention facilities, meaning the activities provided are set to be nothing like those offered to detainees in Australia, government sources have said.

The first asylum seekers to arrive will be housed in tents and temporary structures.

A Nauru government spokesman said the community was looking forward to welcoming asylum seekers again, four years after Labor closed the Howard Government’s processing centre.

At the time then immigration minister Chris Evans said: The Pacific solution was a cynical, costly and ultimately unsuccessful exercise introduced on the eve of a Federal election by the Howard Government.

Naurus school is ready to welcome asylum seeker children again while the community would benefit from volunteer programs, he said.

Asylum seekers are again expected to be free to roam the tiny phosphate island in the Pacific, which is near the equator.
RAMSHACKLE: About 20 Defence personnel landed on Manus Island as part of a reconnaissance mission for a future refugee facility

Photo: GARY RAMAGE