

## [iPod ban for Christmas Island detainees](#)

Chris Thompson  
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A scheme that let Christmas Island detainees buy iPods with Federal Government money has been scuppered by Australia's immigration department after impoverished locals objected to it.

A Department of Immigration and Citizenship spokesman told WAtoday a loophole allowing asylum seekers to accrue enough credits to buy the coveted portable sound systems was closed on September 1.

"Clients in the immigration detention centre and alternative detention on Christmas Island do not receive any cash allowance but can purchase incidentals through the use of a points-based system called the purchasing allowance scheme (PAS)," the spokesman said.

"Clients could previously accrue points over successive weeks, which enabled them to obtain items such as iPods.

"Under new arrangements implemented on Christmas Island - as a result of the ongoing review of allowances by the department - PAS points may not be accumulated over successive weeks."

The spokesman said the points were now reset weekly and any unused credits forfeited.

"Like clients in immigration detention onshore, people in the immigration detention centre and alternative detention on Christmas Island receive a maximum of 50 PAS points, equivalent to \$50, a week," he said.

"The PAS is still in place, however under new arrangements people in detention can accrue a maximum of 50 points for incidental items only.

"They cannot accrue points over successive weeks to obtain bigger items."

The spokesman said the move to limit the points system to basic items only arose from a "process of continual review and improvement of arrangements on Christmas Island".

However, Christmas Island Shire President Gordon Thomson said he regretted the changes had been made in response to local objections.

"There was the view that people were able to accumulate points and buy electronic equipment and it's a pity that they won't be able to do that now," Councillor Thomson said yesterday, hours after the first road was closed for the island's annual red crab migration.

"You know, some of my friends have that view ... and I find it quite disappointing.

"There are people in our community who have put a lot of effort into spreading bad news about refugees and it's become a bit of an epidemic."

Cr Thomson acknowledged his liberal attitude to detainees was partly why two of his supporters lost their councillor positions at the Christmas Island elections two weekends ago.

"There are people who are doing it pretty hard on Christmas Island that don't like it that refugees are getting a government-supplied iPod when they can't afford one," he said.

The immigration department spokesman said that iPods previously procured under the PAS scheme had not been confiscated.

He hosed down rumours - expressed anonymously yesterday by several councillors recently muzzled by the shire from speaking to the media - that the department had directly issued iPods and mobile phones to asylum seekers.

"We have never 'issued' iPods or mobile phones to detainees," he said.

"At no time have clients accommodated in facilities on Christmas Island been able to obtain mobile phones."

The spokesman said boat people could still use the points to buy cigarettes, phone cards, lollies and extra food.