



## AUSTRALIAN CATHOLIC BISHOPS CONFERENCE

### Australian Catholic Migrant and Refugee Office



#### **The Australian Catholic Bishops call for on-shore processing of asylum seekers**

#### **Media Release**

**15 September, 2011**

The Australian Catholic Bishops call for on-shore processing of asylum seekers who arrive in Australia.

"Australia has an exceptional community lead resettlement program. Over 200 Charities have recently expressed their passion and commitment to work with refugees and asylum seekers in community based detention" said Fr Maurizio, director of the Australian Catholic Migrant and Refugee Office.

"Community based detention reaffirms the human dignity of the person seeking asylum and is in the best interests of the common good of all humanity" he said.

The Australian Catholic Migrant and Refugee Office warn that off-shore processing will not solve the underlying problem.

"The human drive to escape war and poverty will continue to prompt asylum seekers to find alternatives, potentially placing their lives in even greater danger of exploitation and abuse" said Fr Maurizio.

"Compelled migrants need refuge from conflict zones, but more than this, they need an opportunity to live a dignified life with access to health, education and employment" he said.

"When these fundamental rights are denied in their homeland – they have the right to emigrate. This is not by choice. No one wants to be in this situation" he said.

"The current government has done much to humanise the approach towards asylum seekers, but should reflect further their motives for wanting to change the Migration Act. The lives of our brothers and sisters will be severely affected" he said.

The numbers of asylum seekers that Australia can expect are not so large that we can't manage it effectively here.

The Australian Catholic Migrant and Refugee Office urge the Government not to change the Immigration (Guardianship of Children) Act which would allow the transfer of Children and unaccompanied minors.

"These young people are among the most vulnerable in the world; the moral and decent thing to do is to process their asylum claims in Australia" said Fr Maurizio.

**For media enquiries or to arrange an interview with Fr Maurizio Pettenà, please contact Beth Doherty on 0407 081 256 or Joe Moloney on 02 6201 9848.**