



AUSTRALIAN CATHOLIC BISHOPS CONFERENCE

Australian Catholic Migrant and Refugee Office



The Australian Catholic Bishops welcome on-shore processing of asylum seekers **Media Release** **14 October, 2011**

The Catholic Church welcomes the decision taken yesterday by the Government to process the claims of vulnerable asylum seekers onshore.

Yesterday, the Prime Minister, decided to delay the Migration Bill accepting that onshore processing had to be adopted. This came after the High Court found that the Government did not have the power to swap asylum seekers with Malaysia due to inadequate protection safeguards.

“The Government knows all too well the views of the Catholic Church on this matter. The Catholic Church has always been advocating in favour of onshore processing”, said Fr Maurizio Pettena, Director of the Australian Catholic Migrant and Refugee Office.

“Global contemporary migration which reveals the plight of asylum seekers is marked by injustices, abuses, exploitation, human trafficking and all sort of persecutions. This poses a very serious and urgent call to action on the part of the human community and more so on the part of those who have been elected to public offices to serve for the good of all”, he said.

The Catholic Church offers pastoral care to asylum seekers both during the time their visas are being processed and after and has always offered to work with the Government in the pursuit of more humane ways to respond to the cry of asylum seekers.

“More boats will likely come as this unfortunately is the reality of the world we live in – there is still much suffering in the world. However, this is not a call for alarm or community anxiety, on the contrary, Australia boasts over 200 Charities ready to support asylum seekers in the community. Helping others never leads to social unrest; rather, it builds goodwill, peace and international respect” said Fr Pettena.

The Catholic Church calls on all political parties to work towards implementing a fast and effective system of onshore processing which will give back to asylum seekers the human dignity they long for and will enable them to fully contribute to our Australian society.

“The Government has been visionary in hosting asylum seekers in the community, having recently moved a great number of Children out of detention. The catholic church strongly encourages the Government to continue in this endeavour” he said.

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.