



AUSTRALIAN CATHOLIC BISHOPS CONFERENCE

Australian Catholic Migrant and Refugee Office



Jesuit Refugee Service Australia

Increase resettlement and be part of the solution

Media Release

29 June 2012

The Australian Catholic Migrant and Refugee Office (ACMRO) and Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS) are pleased with the Senate decision to not proceed with offshore processing for irregular maritime arrivals who seek asylum in Australia.

20 years of mandatory detention have not effectively stopped people seeking asylum, and there is little evidence that further deterrence measures such as offshore processing in Nauru or elsewhere will stem the flow either.

Afghanistan, Iraq, Iran and Sri Lanka all feature in the top 10 countries at risk of serious human rights violations and mass killings. “The motivation to protect ones own life and their family is the strongest reason to seek asylum; deterrence measures don’t change this,” said Fr Pettenà, National Director ACMRO.

“There is a great and urgent need to tackle the phenomenon of asylum seekers at its source and create regional cooperation which allows asylum seekers and refugees the opportunity to rebuild their lives and contribute to the community that welcomes them,” he said.

“A regional solution is one which cares for the protection of vulnerable populations throughout source, transit and destination countries,” said Fr Pettenà.

“Asylum seekers get on boats because they are desperate and want to reach safe harbour in a place where they can find protection. Asylum seekers try to get to Australia, however perilous the journey, because it is the one country in the region where they believe they can get this protection,” said Fr Aloysius Mowe SJ, Director of JRS Australia.

“Countries north of Australia host far larger numbers of asylum seekers and refugees than the relatively small numbers that come to Australia,” said Fr Mowe, “A regional solution will require fair and equitable sharing of asylum seekers and refugees hosted across the region, and a regionally coordinated effort to process refugee claims and resettlement.”



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“Both Labor and the Coalition believe that Australia is easily able to increase our annual humanitarian intake to around 20,000. Doing so would be a good first step towards resolving the current political impasse,” said Fr Mowe, “but the government must also provide the kind of leadership that will lead to the enhancement of protection in countries of first asylum such as Malaysia and Indonesia.”

For media enquiries or to arrange an interview please contact Joe Moloney (ACMRO) on (02) 6201 9848, or Chris Gration (JRS) on (02) 9356 3888.