



## AUSTRALIAN CATHOLIC BISHOPS CONFERENCE

### Australian Catholic Migrant and Refugee Office



#### **The Human Dignity of Asylum Seekers comes before National Interests** **22 July 2013** **Media Release**

The Australian Catholic Migrant and Refugee Office call for Australia's asylum seeker policies to be inspired by the centrality of human dignity and the obligation to care for our brothers and sisters who, in their desperation, ask for our welcome and assistance.

“Each and every one of us must rise above indifference and have the courage to open our hearts to asylum seekers, to listen to their hopes, to empathise with their despair, and to welcome them into our community.” said Bishop Gerard Hanna, Australian Catholic Bishop's Delegate for Migrants and Refugees.

“Our thoughts and active involvement is accompanied by our prayerful support for these people who have endured so much in the hope of making a life for themselves in Australia and who will now be denied this opportunity” said Bishop Hanna.

“The new resettlement arrangements with Papua New Guinea are based on the premise that it is wrong for people fleeing from persecution to seek asylum in Australia” said Bishop Hanna “this is fundamentally untrue.”

“We have the duty as members of one human family to help those who arrive on our shores seeking asylum and to strive with all our resources to assist them no matter how inconvenient this may prove to be.” he said.

“We also share the concerns raised by the Catholic Bishops Conference of Papua New Guinea and Solomon Islands” said Bishop Hanna “that Australia is asking the people of Papua New Guinea to show a level of generosity far beyond their economic means.”

“An alternative way to prevent tragedies at sea is to accept more refugees from source countries and provide the possibility and the hope of reaching Australia through a regular legal pathway” said Fr Pettenà National Director of ACMRO and Consulter of the Pontifical Council for the Pastoral Care of Migrants and Itinerant People.

“At the root cause of forced migration is the failure of various Nations to uphold human rights and respect human dignity” said Fr Pettenà “the ultimate solution is to seek justice, up hold the rule of law and encourage all other Nations to do likewise.”

“Full respect and care for asylum seekers must come before the National and political interests of any country” he said “importantly in this context, we must uphold our international human rights obligations under the 1951 Refugee Convention.”

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