



# AUSTRALIAN CATHOLIC BISHOPS CONFERENCE

## Australian Catholic Migrant and Refugee Office



### **Catholic Church expresses sadness over Manus Island death** **19 February, 2014** **Media release**

The Australian Catholic Migrant and Refugee Office (ACMRO) expresses great sadness at the tragic loss of life at Manus Island yesterday.

One Iranian asylum seeker died and others were injured in a riot involving 77 asylum seekers on Monday evening. The asylum seeker died after a confrontation with PNG police.

Bishops' Delegate for Migrants and Refugees Bishop Gerard Hanna has called for calm, and urged people to consider the situations which lead asylum seekers to flee countries like Iran.

“Asylum seekers often endure horrific violence and persecution in their home countries. Australia was once a place of refuge but now the journey to Australia is marked by grief, hardship and further exile”, said Bishop Hanna.

“Persecution of marginalised groups is the underlying reason the world has so many displaced people. It is essential that nations uphold the rule of law and respect fundamental human rights, such as the right to seek asylum.”

“How our government treats those in its care speaks to our community and internationally about what is acceptable in the treatment of our fellow human beings” said Bishop Hanna.

“The current asylum policy is undermining Australia’s integrity and reputation in the international arena; Australia is less a country of refuge, but increasingly one of restrictive policies.”

The ACMRO calls on the government to ensure each person’s claim for protection is considered under Australian Law by competent independent authorities, with appropriate legal assistance and access to an independent judiciary such as the Refugee Review Tribunal.

The same Office urges the government to employ an independent body outside of any Government Department to review the recent events involving the death of an asylum seeker on Manus Island.

“In these matters, we stress that the information available to the Australian people ought be transparent in order to fully understand the complex circumstances asylum seekers face while being held in offshore detention facilities,” said Bishop Hanna.

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