



AUSTRALIAN CATHOLIC BISHOPS CONFERENCE

“IT IS TIME TO BRING THEM HERE”

Statement in support of offshore detainees

By Archbishop Denis Hart, President, Australian Catholic Bishops Conference

13 October 2016

One of the greatest crises of our day is the plight of people forced from their own countries by war, persecution or poverty and forced to live without a home, without safety and often separated from their families.

Pope Francis has called on Catholics to welcome such vulnerable people as our brothers and sisters. In Australia, we do not have to directly meet the responsibilities that many other nations bear. But we do bear the shame of the expulsion and harsh treatment of the people who sought our protection only to be detained on Nauru and Manus Island.

International agencies have been appalled by the conditions under which they live and the effects on their health, spirits and self-respect. Pope Francis, to whom people detained on Manus Island have written, has also expressed his deep concern. The human costs on the detainees are mounting by the day.

The Australian Catholic Bishops also deplore the detention of our brothers and sisters on Nauru and Manus Island. While recognising the effort of the Government to find a solution, we say that enough is enough. We call on the Government to bring offshore detainees to Australia while awaiting further decisions on their future.

We endorse the campaign to ‘Bring Them Here’ to Australia. We pledge the help of our Catholic communities and institutions to welcome and support these refugees when they arrive, including Catholic health, education and social services.

As the Jubilee of Mercy comes to a close, it is time to cultivate the works of mercy and to harvest its fruits as a Church.

The Australian Catholic Bishops are working with the Catholic Alliance for People Seeking Asylum (CAPSA) advisory group, which brings together Catholic peak bodies across education, health, welfare, and the broader church along with key national Catholic organisations.

CAPSA is ready and willing to lead a coordinated approach to support the men, women and children currently on Nauru and Manus Island as they arrive in Australia. Many parishes and local communities are also ready to assist.

Members of the Catholic community who wish to be of assistance, you are invited to contact CAPSA at, www.capsa.org.au or info@capsa.org.au.

Media Contact: Aoife Connors on 0450 348 597 or media@catholic.org.au

Social media hashtags, #BringThemHere #WithRefugees #YearOfMercy



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Some additional quotes from Bishop Vincent Long Van Nguyen OFM Conv, Australian Catholic Bishops Delegate for Migrants and Refugees.

For media purposes

‘Australia, often galvanised by popular pressure, rose to the challenge in the past with its generous embrace of migrants and refugees. It proved itself especially courageous during the Indochinese exodus and accepted an unprecedented number of Asian refugees for the first time in its history. Many thousand former Vietnamese boat people and I are living witnesses to this.’

‘Australia is a wonderful country but where it is in terms of its treatment of asylum seekers should galvanise us into action. We cannot be his disciples if we ignore the plight of the marginalised and the vulnerable.’

The Pope writes, ‘Today, more than in the past, the Gospel of mercy troubles our consciences, prevents us from taking the suffering of others for granted, and points out ways of responding which, grounded in the theological virtues of faith, hope and charity, find practical expression in works of spiritual and corporal mercy’.