



AUSTRALIAN CATHOLIC BISHOPS CONFERENCE

**Media Release
July 15, 2005**

PALMER INQUIRY HIGHLIGHTS IMMIGRATION DETENTION INADEQUACIES - CATHOLIC BISHOP.

“The report of the Inquiry by Mr Mick Palmer into Immigration Detention has highlighted serious mental health issues within the immigration detention regime”, Bishop Joseph Grech, Chairman of the Bishops’ Committee for Migrants and Refugees, said today.. “The report resulted from the detention of Cornelia Rau, and is the last of a number of inquiries that have found that Detention Centres are ill-equipped to deal with the mental health and well-being needs of detainees”.

Bishop Grech continued: “The Department of Immigration and Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs (DIMIA) should concentrate on improving its role in the refugee determination process. It should ensure that care of asylum seekers, including children and the mentally ill, is the responsibility of qualified practitioners”.

Bishop Grech welcomed the fact that the Prime Minister, both personally and on behalf of the Government, had apologized to Cornelia Rau and Vivian Alvarez, the person who was wrongfully deported to the Philippines. He also extended his sympathy to the two women.

Finally, Bishop Grech hoped that the Palmer Report would present yet another occasion for the Federal Government to review the policy of mandatory detention. A start was made recently due to the efforts of the Hon Petro Georgiou and other members of the Government.

“But there is still a way to go” he said. “The Government should cease to ignore the viable and effective alternatives to detention that various people have been proposing for a number of years. These alternatives are well-developed, and can help solve the serious problems of the present mandatory detention system”.

**For more information contact Bishop Joseph Grech on 03 5441 2544
or Fr John Murphy on 0418 224 524**
