



**Media Release**

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**Catholic Bishop welcomes reforms to immigration detention policy**

The Federal Government's announcement today of a new policy to restrict the use of mandatory detention for asylum seekers was a welcome move to a more humane system of testing protection claims, the Catholic Church said today.

Bishop Joseph Grech, the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference spokesman on immigration issues, said the announcement by Immigration Minister Chris Evans represented an important day for Australia.

"We warmly welcome the government's moves to reform the immigration detention system," Bishop Grech said.

"The new risk-based detention policy will do much to restore balance to the treatment of asylum seekers in this country so that people who pose a low risk can live in the community while their claims are being tested, rather than being locked up indefinitely.

"This is something we have called for over many years and is a more humane way of dealing with people who arrive in Australia, often from desperate situations in other countries, seeking our protection."

Bishop Grech said that changing the emphasis of the detention policy so that the Department will have to justify why a person should be detained would ensure that a fairer system would prevail.

"We particularly welcome the Minister's commitment that children will not be detained in an immigration detention centre," he said.

"The reforms announced today will go a long way towards creating a system which meets Australia's international humanitarian obligations towards asylum seekers while retaining enough checks and balances to ensure the integrity of Australia's immigration program".

**Media Contact:** Monsignor John Murphy at the Australian Catholic Migrant and Refugee Office on 0418224524.