



AUSTRALIAN CATHOLIC BISHOPS CONFERENCE Australian Catholic Migrant and Refugee Office



**ACMRO offers sympathy on death of Sri Lankan refugee;
renews call for an end to mandatory detention.**

**Media Release,
28 October 2011**

The Australian Catholic Migrant and Refugee Office offer our condolence to the family of the Sri Lankan refugee who passed away on Wednesday, 26 October. Our thoughts and prayers go out to his family and to the Sri Lankan community.

The Australian Catholic Migrant and Refugee Office also wish to express our empathy to the many other refugees and asylum seekers still in detention waiting for their claims to be assessed and processed.

Director of the ACMRO, Fr Maurizio Pettená lamented “this is another very sad story of immigration detention.”

“Australia still has over 4400 asylum seekers in immigration detention facilities. Over 2000 of these have been deprived of their liberty for more than 12 months, despite the fact they have committed no crime. This injustice must end” said Fr Pettená.

“The length of time spent in detention and the frustration of not been able to challenge their detention or seek explanation of why their detention is being prolonged, understandably may result in tragedies such as the taking of one’s own life” he said.

In 1950 in response to the refugees of World War II, the Australian Bishops wrote to the Catholic faithful, “Patience, kindness, sympathy and practical help must be rendered to all unfailingly and in God’s Name”. This message remains true today.

“There are community based alternatives to detention and the Government needs to hear support for such initiatives from all Australians who believe in the dignity of human life” he said.

Fr Pettená urges the Australian Catholic faithful to pray for those still in detention and for an end to indefinite mandatory detention.

For media enquiries or to arrange an interview with Fr Maurizio Pettená CS, please contact Beth Doherty on 0407 081 256