



AUSTRALIAN CATHOLIC BISHOPS CONFERENCE

Australian Catholic Migrant and Refugee Office



Catholic Migrant office calls for reflection on asylum policy during the Christmas season.

**Media Release,
23 December 2011**

The Australian Catholic Migrant and Refugee Office today urged both political parties to show moral leadership over the Christmas period with regard to policy debates on asylum seekers and refugees.

Director of the ACMRO Fr Maurizio Pettenà CS expressed the view that people seeking asylum need to be processed in countries who are signatories to the UN Refugee Convention and who can assure them of the opportunity to rebuild their lives in dignity.

“Richer countries like Australia have a moral duty to do more to help the world’s refugees who are mostly hosted by poorer nations” he said.

“Christmas reminds us that it is in giving that we receive. This applies even more so to how much we give to those who seek asylum. Increasing the humanitarian program is an appropriate outcome that both political parties can agree on.”

At this time of Christmas, Fr Pettenà urged political and religious leaders and all people of good will to defend the human dignity of asylum seekers.

“Once again the lives of asylum seekers have become a point of political contention. Christians should however see this issue instead as an opportunity to reflect on Christ coming in to the world and teaching us non-negotiable values: welcoming, protecting the little ones and the most vulnerable”, he said.

“People’s lives are at risk not just on the high seas but in the very real and very dangerous situations in which they find themselves in armed conflict or subject to horrific exploitation”.

“The Old Testament calls on us to treat the foreigner with love as though they were your own citizens. Jesus promises the Kingdom to those who welcome the stranger,” said Fr Pettenà.

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