



## AUSTRALIAN CATHOLIC BISHOPS CONFERENCE

### Australian Catholic Migrant and Refugee Office



#### **ACMRO offers sympathy on death of Afghan asylum seeker; renews call for an end to mandatory detention.**

**Media Release,  
29 March, 2011**

The Australian Catholic Migrant and Refugee Office offer sympathy to the family of the Afghan man who died on Monday in immigration detention.

Director of the ACMRO Fr Maurizio Pettena highlighted the tragedy of the situation and offered prayers to those affected.

"Death in immigration detention is particularly tragic because the detainee's last days are spent in despair, isolation and hopelessness, away from home and family", he said.

"We will keep this man and his family very much in our prayers. At this stage, it is appropriate for DIAC to keep the details surrounding the death confidential out of respect for family members. However, ACMRO strongly urges the Coroner to hold an inquiry to shed light on the circumstances surrounding this death", he said.

The ACMRO today has also renewed its call to end mandatory detention, citing serious mental health concerns about the impact of detention on vulnerable people.

"Mandatory detention inflicts extreme suffering and frustration on already vulnerable people. We are all witnesses to the human cost of immigration detention. The government cannot deny that prolonged detention will likely result in instances of suicide. The fact that five asylum seekers in the last seven months have died, weighs heavily on the social conscience of Australia.

Australia already has one of the highest rates of youth suicide. The government must affirm the dignity of all human life and regard the lives of youth in detention as highly as it regards the lives of young Australians.

The ACMRO believes that choosing to isolate vulnerable people makes a difficult situation worse.

"Detention centres compound the anxiety and hopelessness of detainees who require extra support to compensate for the conditions they experienced in detention", said Fr Maurizio.

"The government has a responsibility to ensure that when they detain asylum seekers, that they also provide adequate medical services. This response must go well beyond first aid. Adequate medical care for detainees must always include access to medical doctors and professional counsellors. These services are best provided on the mainland in accessible areas," said Fr Maurizio.

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