



AUSTRALIAN CATHOLIC BISHOPS CONFERENCE

Australian Catholic Migrant and Refugee Office



20,000 Humanitarian Program Will Save Lives **15 May 2013** **Media Release**

The Australian Catholic Migrant and Refugee Office applaud the government's commitment to provide refuge for 20,000 of the world's most vulnerable people through the humanitarian program.

Over the last 15 years Australia has resettled around 13,500 refugees and humanitarian entrants each year. Following the recommendations from the expert panel report released in August 2012 the current Labor government increased that number to 20,000.

"Of the over 15 million refugees worldwide, only 80,000 will be resettled each year" said Bishop Gerard Hanna, Australian Catholic Bishops Delegate for Migrants and Refugees.

"These visas are incredibly valuable providing successful applicants a legal pathway to escape from war-torn countries and to start a new life in Australia" he said.

"The Catholic Church in Australia is blessed with the presence of over 1 million migrants and many of these come from countries facing very difficult humanitarian challenges" said Bishop Hanna.

"The renewed commitment to maintain the humanitarian program at 20,000 places will be welcome news to many members of our community" he said.

"The overwhelming majority of refugees are hosted by some of the world's poorest nations" said Fr Pettenà National Director of ACMRO.

"It is very disappointing to hear political rhetoric suggesting to take this number back down to 13,500" said Fr Pettenà "we see how important resettlement is for saving people's lives and how vital it is to the role Australia plays in the international community."

"At the moment we see people seeking asylum making risky boat journeys because they have no other choice; the humanitarian program is their only legal pathway to reach Australia" he said.

"Reducing the humanitarian intake will almost certainly exacerbate the situation; 7000 asylum seekers will thereby be left with no other choice than to make the journey by boat, rather than through the possibility of formal resettlement in the humanitarian program" said Fr Pettenà.

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