



# AUSTRALIAN CATHOLIC BISHOPS CONFERENCE

## Australian Catholic Migrant and Refugee Office



### Support for hosting asylum seekers in the community Media Release 28 February 2013

The Australian Catholic Migrant and Refugee Office fully support the current policy of hosting asylum seekers in the community on bridging visas and in community residence determination. We have great respect for the decision to increase Australia's humanitarian intake to 20,000 each year and also believe it is appropriate for Australia to defend the right of all people to seek asylum.

“Asylum seekers are not criminals and should not be treated as such. The suggestion that serious crimes committed by one asylum seekers gives grounds for treating all asylum seekers as criminals is greatly concerning” said Fr Maurizio Pettenà, Director of ACMRO.

“The hosting of asylum seekers in the community is an entirely appropriate, effective and humane way for Australia to respond. We have thousands of Australians who have volunteered their time to help asylum seekers and in the process have developed wonderful friendships” said Fr Pettenà.

Helping asylum seekers to rebuild their lives and become fully contributing members of the local community is both a joy and wonderful gift for Catholics to be a part of, “whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.” Mt 25:40

“The fact remains that current policies on boarder control are already too though said Fr Pettenà.

“The continued use of mandatory and indefinite immigration detention have witnessed several suicides in immigration detention and countless self-harm incidents, many involving children in just the last three years alone. On top of this children and families continue to be detained in remote regional areas and more recently on Nauru and Manus Island under appalling conditions” he said.

“After hearing stories of asylum seekers and the terrible misery and violence they escape from, it is heart breaking to witness the hostile way asylum seekers are treated once they arrive in Australia” he said.

“Calls for further toughening of asylum policy are incredibly disappointing because they reflect a policy of fear rather than one of welcoming and are been pursued at the expense of human dignity and the moral obligation to afford protection for the most vulnerable” said Fr Pettenà.