



AUSTRALIAN CATHOLIC BISHOPS CONFERENCE

Australian Catholic Migrant and Refugee Office



Closure of four immigration detention centres welcomed 15 January, 2014 Media Release

The Australian Catholic Migrant and Refugee Office (ACMRO) welcomes the decision by the Federal Government to close four immigration detention facilities in Australia.

Detention centres in far-North Queensland (Scherger), Tasmania (Pontville), Western Australia (Leonora), and South Australia (Port Augusta) are set to close in a move which immigration minister Scott Morrison describes as “proof” that the Government’s border protection policies have slowed boat arrivals.

“It is not a crime to seek asylum yet sadly these detention centres have been a source of immense pain and misery for thousands of our brothers and sisters who have come to us in search of refuge”, said Fr Maurizio Pettenà, National Director of the ACMRO.

“Australia should treat those who come to our shores with respect and dignity. Locking asylum seekers in immigration detention centres is punitive and immoral, and most asylum seekers that have arrived in Australia have been found to meet the legal definition of a refugee”, said Fr Pettenà.

“Asylum seekers have been effectively hosted in our community for many years now which is a much more humane alternative to closed immigration detention” he said.

“The recent decline in boat arrivals is nothing to boast about if we haven’t found other ways to help people who are still in desperate need of refuge. The Catholic Church encourages governments to implement policies which assist people seeking asylum”, he said.

“One of the most life affirming and compassionate ways Australia can help is through our refugee resettlement program”, he said.

“Just last year, the refugee program had 20,000 places available, but sadly this program has been severely reduced to around 13,000 places making it even harder for refugees and asylum seekers”, said Fr Pettenà.

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