



AUSTRALIAN CATHOLIC BISHOPS CONFERENCE Australian Catholic Migrant and Refugee Office



Catholic Church expresses support for Tamil asylum seeker in hospital 11 April 2014 Media Release

It is tragic news that a young Sri Lankan asylum seeker be so overwhelmed by grief and hopelessness that he would douse himself in petrol and set himself alight.

The young Tamil asylum seeker had been living in Australia for the past 18 months on a bridging visa while his application for permanent protection was under consideration.

When his visa application was denied the young man left a suicide note stating he would rather die in Australia than die in Sri Lanka. The young man is in a critical condition in Sydney's Concord Hospital with burns to most of his body.

The Australian Catholic Migrant and Refugee Office are deeply concerned for the mental and physical well-being of this young man and hope his situation may improve.

“Sadly what is missing from Australia's treatment of asylum seekers is the recognition that asylum seekers are human beings, they feel pain, rejection, hopelessness and understandably in these types of situations people often fall into despair and consider taking their own life” said Bishops' Delegate for Migrants and Refugees Bishop Gerard Hanna.

“The Australian government has gone to such great lengths to punish and deter asylum seekers by treating them so inhumanely and cruelly that self-harm incidents are widespread and occur regularly in Australian immigration detention centres. This young man attempting to end his own life is not an isolated incident” said Bishop Hanna.

The Australian Catholic Migrant and Refugee Office urge the Australian government to consider other visa options before returning Tamils to Sri Lanka. Widespread persecution of Tamils living in Sri Lanka remains a reality despite the official end to the horrific civil war which saw over 40,000 Tamils brutally killed.

For media enquiries, please contact Joe Moloney (02) 6201 9848).