



## AUSTRALIAN CATHOLIC BISHOPS CONFERENCE Australian Catholic Migrant and Refugee Office



### **Australian Senators called on to uphold the human dignity of asylum seekers 28 November 2014 Media Release**

The Australian Catholic Migrant and Refugee Office calls on Australian Senators to safeguard and defend the human dignity of asylum seekers.

The call on parliamentarians comes in advance of voting on the upcoming Migration and Maritime Powers Legislation Amendment (the Asylum Legacy Caseload) Bill 2014.

The Australian Catholic Migrant and Refugee Office (ACMRO), an agency of the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference, is gravely concerned the legislative proposals in the current Bill will undermine the Refugee Convention and further erode an already precarious legal situation for people seeking protection in Australia.

The proposed Bill will expand the authority of the Minister for Immigration and Border Protection to intercept and remove people seeking protection to any place outside of Australia, while limiting the review process by courts or Parliament.

The proposed Bill also seeks to reintroduce Temporary Protection Visas which will increase the uncertainty around gaining permanent protection and family reunification.

The Bill also introduces a fast track asylum process which limits access to independent merits review, and will force people seeking protection to navigate a complex legal system without appropriate support and advice.

In addition the Bill proposes to replace the internationally accepted definition of refugee status with the Government's own interpretation and weaken Australia's human rights commitments.

Director of the Australian Catholic Migrant and Refugee Office Fr Maurizio Pettenà said "There are humane ways to assist asylum seekers in our community. The Catholic Church through its parishes and agencies continues to help asylum seekers rebuild their lives in Australia."

"The Asylum Legacy Caseload Bill undermines Australian values stating 'the laws of natural justice do not apply'. Consequently, Senators are faced with a moral decision," Fr Pettenà said.

The ACMRO believes the proposed 'Resolving the Asylum Legacy Caseload' Bill 2014 will not protect the most vulnerable in its current form.

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