



AUSTRALIAN CATHOLIC BISHOPS CONFERENCE

Australian Catholic Migrant and Refugee Office



Children Bartered in securing Migration and Maritime Powers Legislation Amendment Bill 2014. The Bill is unethical, according to the Australian Catholic Migrant and Refugee Office.

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Media Release

In an all-time low for Australian politics, the Minister for Immigration and Border Protection Scott Morrison, has won crossbencher's support in passing a Bill that gives the government unprecedented powers to deal with asylum seekers.

The controversial Migration and Maritime Powers Legislation Amendment (the Asylum Legacy Caseload) Bill 2014 allows Australian officials to redefine who is classified as a refugee. This legislation enables the Government to overwrite the internationally accepted definition by the United Nations Refugee Convention, despite Australia being a signatory to the Convention.

Other measures introduced in this Bill include the reintroduction of temporary protection visas allowing asylum seekers to work and study. This visa will not provide a pathway to permanency nor allow family reunification meaning asylum seekers' lives will remain in a state of insecurity and anxiety. The Bill also allows the government to detain asylum seekers and fast track refugee status determinations. In practise it means that the government will remain unchecked and unchallenged in its decision-making.

Director of the Australian Catholic Migrant and Refugee Office Fr Maurizio Pettenà said, "Not only is the content of this Bill unethical, but equally so is the nature in which it has been conducted by the Immigration Minister. Children were bartered to secure this deal. When a government lowers its policies to essentially bargaining vulnerable people for political gain, it raises questions about our morality as a people. Having children detained in the first instance was not an acceptable option."

Under the new Bill, Fr Pettena welcomes the proposed release of approximately 100 children from Christmas Island before Christmas and the agreement to raise the humanitarian intake.

"Yet, many questions about the implementation of this Bill remain unanswered," Fr Maurizio said.

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