



## AUSTRALIAN CATHOLIC BISHOPS CONFERENCE

### Australian Catholic Migrant and Refugee Office



16 November 2016

#### **Media Statement from Fr Maurizio Pettena, Australian Catholic Bishops Delegate for Refugees**

“The Australian Catholic Migrant and Refugee Office (ACMRO) welcomes the announcement by Prime Minister, Malcolm Turnbull, and Minister for Immigration, Peter Dutton that the Government will offer those on Manus Island and Nauru a one-off deal to resettle in the United States of America.”

“The ACMRO is grateful to the USA for accepting to resettle asylum seekers and opening its doors and welcoming those who have been awaiting settlement after many years of detention.”

“The ACMRO, however, is disappointed that Australia did not take the step of settling at least some of those on Manus Island or Nauru in Australia, showing other nations that we are accepting our fair share of the current refugee crisis.

“Until there is an end to wars, famine, persecution and violence, there will always be people who are forced to seek asylum. Unless there are proper and fast ways to assess genuine claims of asylum, there will always be people smugglers capitalising on opportunities to exploit people as it represents a hope for a safe future.”

“The ACMRO also expresses its concerns for those who may not satisfy the requirements to be settled in the USA and hopes that alternative paths to settlement may be found; this could include at looking into skills and family reunifications amongst others.”

“The ACMRO at the same time calls on the government to honour this agreement with the United States irrespective of the outcome of the Migration Legislation Amendment (Regional Processing Cohort) Bill 2016.”

“We have heard from the Prime Minister and Minister of Immigration that the only reason a deal like this is possible is due to the ‘tough stance’ which includes the measures of this bill which we believe is unnecessary and deeply disappointing.”

“Australia is a richly resourced country which has had a big heart for migrants and refugees in the past; this is something for all Australian to be proud of and needs to be brought to the forefront of these debates.”

“I once again call on the Government to always put the dignity of the human person first in all decision regarding the welfare of those on Manus Island and Nauru.”

*Fr Maurizio Pettena is Director of the Australian Migrant and Refugee Office*

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