

2004

Statement

**Catholic Bishops Call for Urgent Response to the  
Needs of Asylum Seekers and Refugees**

*Australian Catholic Bishops Conference*

14 May 2004

The Catholic Bishops of Australia have issued a statement in which they call for the [3125]  
Government and all Australians to respond with urgency to the needs of asylum  
seekers and refugees.

The Bishops, meeting together in their Plenary Session in Sydney, have called for [3126]  
the nation's response to asylum seekers to be just, compassionate and consistent  
with Australia's obligations under International Law and the 1951 United Nations  
Convention on Refugees and other Conventions to which Australia is a signatory.

We plead the cause of refugees and asylum seekers again because the Gospel [3127]  
compels us to do so," the Bishops' statement says.

We remain hopeful that hearts and minds will change so that the treatment of [3128]  
refugees and asylum seekers in Australia may be more humane, more respectful of  
human dignity."

The Bishops say Australia must, as a matter of urgency, find alternatives to [3129]  
detention for unaccompanied minors and for children who accompany their parents.

Such alternatives must respect the importance of family unity and family reunion, [3130]  
and ensure that children damaged by detention receive adequately funded care in  
the community. Church agencies have shown their willingness to help in this.

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Source: Archives of the Australian Catholic Migrant and Refugee Office  
(ACMRO), Canberra, Australia.

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