



CATHOLIC JUSTICE AND PEACE COMMISSION OF THE ARCHDIOCESE OF BRISBANE

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Commission Welcomes Government Decision to Release Asylum Seeker Children

Brisbane's Catholic Justice and Peace Commission welcomed the decision by Immigration Minister, Peter Dutton, to release all children remaining in immigration detention in mainland Australia. However, the Commission's Chair, Ms Maree Rose, said the Federal Government needed to do much more to eliminate cruel and unjust measures in its immigration policy.

"The most important change which Mr Dutton needs to make is to close down offshore processing centres in Nauru and Manus Island," Ms Rose said.

"It is very disappointing that the Prime Minister continues to say that we must subject people seeking asylum to more trauma on Nauru and Manus Island as a way of thwarting people smugglers," she said.

"It is totally unacceptable that one group of people who have done nothing more than seek an end to suffering in their homeland should be subjected to indefinite detention in cruel and harsh conditions in order to thwart the activities of so-called people smugglers," she said.

"It is deeply distressing to me that, despite Mr Dutton's decision over the weekend, fifty children, along with their mothers and fathers and other adults, are still languishing on Nauru and facing more suffering and trauma," she said.

The Commission's Executive Officer, Peter Arndt, who joined Christian clergy and leaders in a day-long vigil outside Mr Dutton's Strathpine electorate office last December to pray for an end to the detention of asylum seeker children, encouraged Christians to keep talking to the Minister and all MPs about the cruelty and injustice of the Government's current immigration policy.

"Many adults who have suffered greatly in other parts of the world are still locked up in detention centres around the country," Mr Arndt said.

"We are also beginning to see a number of people come to the end of the refugee determination process and being left destitute by the Government," he said.

"It is shocking to see people left without any income and no ability to buy food and clothing or keep a roof over their heads," he said.

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“The services we speak with expect these numbers to grow over the course of this year,” he said.

“Instead of spending billions of dollars traumatising people who have already suffered greatly, we urge the Government to end offshore processing of protection claims, release into the community all people seeking asylum from mainland detention centres, ensure that all people seeking asylum get a fair go to show that they are refugees, increase our annual refugee intake, and engage in discussions with other countries in our region to develop a better way to process and resettle people seeking asylum,” he said.

Ms Rose paid tribute to the many parishes which are supporting people seeking asylum with accommodation, food and clothing, employment and other forms of practical support.

“We encourage all parishes to be beacons of compassion and justice for asylum seekers in this Jubilee Year of Mercy,” she said.

“By continuing to offer compassionate service to our sisters and brothers in need and by passionately advocating Government policies which respect their human dignity, let’s play our part in overcoming the indifference and heartlessness which plagues our country and our world,” she said.

For further information and comment, please contact Peter Arndt on 0409 265 476.