



Statement by the National Council of Priests of Australia on Asylum Seekers

The National Council of Priests of Australia would like to endorse the statement by the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference (issued 8 May) and express our concern also about the Australian government's treatment of asylum seekers.

Some of our members minister to these asylum seekers in detention centres and are very concerned for their welfare. The hard-line policies of the current Australian government towards asylum seekers and refugees is extinguishing the Christian virtue of hope for many of these people: some of whom have risked their lives for a new and better life after experiencing oppression and extraordinary deprivation both of rights and resources.

Like our Bishops, many of us have seen the faces and heard the stories of these people and cannot hide our shame at the way some are being treated.

We stand with our Bishops in entreating our nation to relook at the way we are currently treating asylum seekers and ask the Australian government to change its cruel and inhuman policy towards those seeking asylum in Australia.

We do not believe that concealing their stories or faces, or keeping secret what the Australian government has been doing to deter these asylum seekers is helpful. We ourselves as a church know the danger of secrecy in dealing with those who have been abused or mistreated in any way.

We call upon the Australian government and all politicians of goodwill to seriously review these policies in order to respect the human dignity of these asylum seekers both in Australia and those transported by the government to other lands.

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