



AUSTRALIAN CATHOLIC BISHOPS CONFERENCE

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Plight of all in immigration detention must be considered

Following the recent revelation of Cornelia Rau's detention, the Australian Catholic Migrant and Refugee Office (ACMRO) and the Australian Catholic Social Justice Council (ACSJC) have joined calls for the Government to ensure an adequate process of inquiry – to prevent a repeat of this person's ordeal and to address the similar treatment of all people in detention.

Bishop Christopher Saunders, Chairman of the ACSJC, said "Whatever the process of inquiry, the public will be looking for reforms ensuring no person will ever again fall through the cracks in the existing system. Inadequacies in state-based missing person notifications will be assessed and there may be calls for a national database. Undoubtedly, all levels of government will need to improve standards of psychiatric assessment and care in jails and detention centres.

"In addition to concerns about the unfortunate treatment of an Australian resident, this inquiry must consider the overall standard of care afforded to all people in detention. The treatment of Cornelia Rau is unacceptable. Logically then, we need to consider the treatment of others in immigration detention who are also vulnerable and deserving of care and dignity", said Bishop Saunders.

Bishop Joseph Grech, Chairman of the Bishops' Committee for Migrants and Refugees, said "The Catholic Bishops of Australia have raised concerns on numerous occasions about conditions in immigration detention centres. We have stated our opposition to mandatory detention of asylum seekers, beyond the need for initial processing. Prolonged detention is gravely injurious, and adds to the trauma that has often been experienced in fleeing oppression and braving a perilous journey.

"Mental health is a significant issue in immigration detention centres. We call on the Australian Government to ensure that due consideration be given to the conditions endured by immigration detainees during the investigations that are now underway", Bishop Grech concluded.