



## CATHOLIC JUSTICE AND PEACE COMMISSION OF THE ARCHDIOCESE OF BRISBANE

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### Media Statement Wednesday 15 November 2017

#### **Australian Government Must Act Immediately to End Manus Island Crisis**

The Catholic Justice & Peace Commission of the Archdiocese of Brisbane and the Social Justice Commission of the Catholic Diocese of Toowoomba call on the Australian Government to end the crisis on Manus Island in Papua New Guinea involving around 600 refugees and people seeking asylum. At present, over 400 are in the processing centre. We call on the Government to immediately bring all the refugees and people seeking asylum currently in the processing centre to Australia.

We further call on the Australian Government to accept the New Zealand Government's offer to resettle 150 refugees. We also urge our Government to work with other governments in our region to provide viable and durable resettlement options for refugees in our region.

Australia's Catholic Bishops called for the closure of the processing centres on Manus Island and Nauru last year. Both our Commissions also joined with many other church and community organisations to support a Refugee Council of Australia call this year to close the centres and to bring all the refugees and people seeking asylum in those centres to Australia.

The on-going crisis on Manus Island can only add to the mental trauma that so many of the men held there already suffer. We fear for their safety and well-being unless the Australian Government acts decisively by bringing all the men to Australia.

The men are human beings just like us. They are fathers, brothers and sons who want to live in freedom and safety. They have waited for freedom for over four years. They have suffered enough uncertainty and do not want to languish in detention centres indefinitely.

We acknowledge the practical and moral support that some Manusians are offering the men and thank them for their generosity and compassion, but the Australian Government has the power to end this crisis. It must accept its obligations to protect the men in the Manus Island centre.

We urge our fellow Catholics and Australians of good will to write to and e-mail their local Federal MPs and their State's Senators and to visit them about this crisis. Please urge them to support the immediate evacuation of the men on Manus Island to Australia. We ask that these approaches to MPs and Senators be made with great vigour and with respect. We reject the use of physical violence or verbal abuse in any approaches to politicians and public demonstrations.

The treatment of the men on Manus Island is cruel and inhumane and it must stop immediately.

In this very concerning situation, let us all be signs of God's love and compassion. May God's mercy inspire us to be tireless and passionate advocates for the dignity of these deeply traumatised men.

*For comment and further information, please contact Peter Arndt (Brisbane) on +61 409265476 or Mark Copland (Toowoomba) on +61 428130895.*

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