



CATHOLIC JUSTICE AND PEACE COMMISSION OF THE ARCHDIOCESE OF BRISBANE

194 Charlotte Street
Brisbane QLD 4000
GPO Box 282 Brisbane QLD 4001
Ph. 07 3324 3441
Fax 07 3336 9177
ABN 25 328 758 007

Media Release

Wednesday 1 August 2018

Catholics Urged to Tell Government to Show Compassion to People Seeking Asylum

The Archdiocesan Justice & Peace Commission in Brisbane has urged Catholic parishes, schools, agencies and groups to participate in a month-long campaign to send a strong and clear message to the Federal Government and Members of Parliament that they want compassion and not cruelty in the treatment of people seeking asylum.

The Commission's Chair, Ms Maree Rose, said that the Commission is particularly concerned about the plight of approximately 300 people in south-east Queensland who have lost almost all support from the Federal Government including income support and help with accommodation.

"Members of the Commission have been meeting with people in this terrible situation for the last year; we have heard many very troubling stories of great hardship and distress," Ms Rose said.

"The Home Affairs Minister, Mr Peter Dutton, recently told us that there should be no compassion shown to any people seeking asylum, but we Catholics cannot agree with his attitude," she said.

"As followers of Jesus Christ, we insist that every human being, including people seeking asylum here in south-east Queensland and on Manus Island and Nauru, be treated with dignity and compassion," she said.

"There is no excuse for the cruelty that has left hundreds of people in our local community in destitution and deep despair," she said

From August 1 until Migrant and Refugee Sunday (26 August), the Commission is asking parishes, schools, agencies and Catholic groups, in particular, to join in an advocacy campaign involving sending photos to the Government of Catholics who want compassion practised in Australia's asylum seeker policy.

"So many parishes, schools, groups and individual Catholics are already responding to this situation by doing everything they can to replace the Government's cruelty with practical and compassionate support," Ms Rose said.

"We invite our fellow Catholics to take photos of groups from their parish, school or agency with arms crossed above their heads in solidarity with the people who are facing destitution and enormous distress," she said.

"We want a large collection of photos on our Facebook page dedicated to advocacy with people seeking asylum, A Movement of the Heart," she said.

"We also want Catholics to take the photos directly to their local MP's office, along with a declaration prepared by the Commission which challenges the Government's policy," she said.

Chairperson: Maree Rose – email marose@bne.catholic.edu.au
Executive Officer: Peter Arndt – email arndtp@bne.catholic.net.au

“We would like the Government and all Parliamentarians to see and hear a clear message from Catholics that we want all people, including people seeking asylum, to be treated with dignity and compassion and that we will do everything we can to replace the Government’s cruelty with practical acts of compassion and solidarity,” she said.

Ms Rose said that the Commission had met with people seeking asylum to obtain their endorsement and on-going participation in the campaign.

“It is very important for us to be working directly with people seeking asylum and ensuring that their needs and priorities are respected,” she added.

A copy of the declaration, along with instructions on participating in this photo advocacy campaign is available on the Commission’s blog:

<http://cjpcbrisbane.wordpress.com/>

The Commission’s A Movement of the Heart Facebook page is at:

<https://www.facebook.com/amovementoftheheart/>

Further information can be obtained by either e-mailing the Commission at cjpc@bne.catholic.net.au or by ringing the Commission’s Executive Officer, Peter Arndt, on 3324 3441 or 0409 265 476.