

24 October 2018

CRA invited to participate in multi-faith delegation to Minister for Immigration

On Thursday 18 October, a representative of Catholic Religious Australia (CRA), Libby Rogerson ibvm, set off to Canberra with Bishop Philip Huggins (Anglican Archdiocese of Melbourne), Rabbi Shamir Caplan (Beit Aharon Synagogue Melbourne), Elizabeth Stone (General Secretary National Council of Churches), Imam Alaa Elzokm (Elsedeq Mosque, Heidelberg) and Harold Zwier (Jewish organiser) to meet with David Coleman, the Minister for Immigration and Shayne Neumann, the Shadow Minister, to discuss concerns about the plight of asylum seeker children on Nauru.

Conscious of the desperation of the people on Nauru and Manus Island, hearing the calls from the AMA, the NGOs, judicial organisations and knowing the work done by faith-based groups, this delegation realised how important it was to offer the Ministers their insights into finding a solution.

“The Ministers listened, and we listened to them – there was, unfortunately, no perceived change in their policies on off-shore processing but they were softening in their attitudes to the children on Nauru,” said Sr Libby.

The Shadow Minister was enthusiastic about sending asylum seekers to New Zealand as soon as possible and he promised to abolish Temporary Protection Visas and Safe Haven Enterprise Visas. David Coleman has only had the portfolio for three weeks and attended the meeting with Russell Broadbent. Both Ministers were committed to settling the refugees and asylum seekers in countries, other than Australia, but there was little detail into how this might be achieved.

The most positive aspect of the day was the coming together of people of different faiths committed to working together, united by much more than the things that divide us and convinced that we have to keep working for a humane, compassionate and decent refugee policy. Australia can be so much better.