

MEDIA RELEASE

27 May 2021

CRA calls for a greater commitment to Family Reunion and to prioritise people over the economy

Catholic Religious Australia (CRA) has urged the government to make changes to its 'Immigration' and 'Humanitarian and Refugee' Programs in a recent submission, to demonstrate a greater commitment to and support of family reunions, for the wellbeing of Australian society and to prioritise people over the economy.

CRA argued that Australia's current Immigration and Humanitarian and Refugee Programs have many obstacles for those seeking family reunion. For example, the small quota and excessive demand for the Non-contributory Parent Visa of the Immigration Program, has led to a very extensive processing period. Timely processing is only available through a Contributory Parent Visa, but this comes at a cost of \$47,755 per applicant. In addition, by barring those with an intellectual or functional impairment from obtaining a Family Reunion (or any other) visa, Australia violates the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, which it has ratified.

"The family is the most fundamental unit of society, and within it, individuals support and nurture one another. Sibling, parent, partner, grandparent, and extended family relationships all contribute to the flourishing and joy of the human person. The family also contributes to the authentically human growth of society when it is able to fully participate within that society," said CRA President Peter Carroll FMS.

CRA also expressed concern in the submission for the Special Humanitarian Program Visa, which is the main avenue for refugees settled in Australia to lodge visa applications for immediate family members still overseas. This program has a similarly small quota, lengthy wait times and comes with many out-of-pocket costs which are largely unattainable for a recently resettled refugee.

Anne Walker, CRA National Executive Director, said, "Although it is commendable that Australia grants physical safety to refugees, prolonged family separation may have very negative emotional and mental impacts on a resettled refugee. Many of Australia's refugee community have lived through the trauma of persecution, greatly needing the support of family members for their healing. They may also hold great fear for the safety of loved ones left behind."

"The focus of the government appears to be economic. Entry into the country should not be granted to only those who can pay but should take into consideration the importance of reuniting families for the social, psychological, emotional and financial welfare of Australians," she added.

MEDIA ENQUIRIES: Sylvia MacRitchie-Hook | M: 0410 644 356 | E: comms@catholicreligious.org.au