



## MEDIA RELEASE

17 February 2022

### CRA supports new Bill to transform Australia's migration policies for the better

Catholic Religious Australia (CRA) has urged the Government to make changes to its system of immigration detention for asylum seekers, in a recent submission strongly supporting the proposed *Ending Indefinite and Arbitrary Immigration Detention Bill 2021* (the Bill).

CRA argued that Australia's current immigration detention policies violate the fundamental human rights of asylum seekers, and adoption of the Bill is therefore necessary to ensure a more just and compassionate treatment of those who seek refuge on our shores, consistent with international legislation.

The *Refugee Convention* states that, because of the precarious nature of refugee flight, no asylum seeker should be punished for seeking safety in another country. Australia's immigration policies, whereby asylum seekers can be automatically detained for an indefinite period, is in direct contravention of this.

"Adoption of the Bill is imperative to ensure that detention becomes the exception, not the rule," said CRA President Peter Carroll FMS.

In its submission, CRA also supported the Bill's prioritisation of the rights and best interests of the child. Under current legislation, the mandatory detention of any non-visa holder in Australia includes children.

"The detention of children can impact their psychological, physical and cognitive development. We therefore endorse the Bill's fundamental principle that children should not be detained, apart from exceptional circumstances with very specific time frames," said Anne Walker, CRA National Executive Director.

CRA supports the Bill's proposal that offshore processing, which costs Australian taxpayers more than \$1 billion a year, be completely dismantled. Any necessary detention should take place in Australia, with detention limited to 12 months and with adequate access to health and mental health services, education, counselling, government services, legal services and the right to work.

CRA backs the Bill's proposal to use community-based alternatives to immigration detention for the vast majority of asylum seekers.

"Not only do community-based alternatives cost less than immigration detention, but more importantly, they provide improvements in individual's health and wellbeing and societal integration, ultimately ensuring that their rights are upheld," Anne said.

"The passing of this Bill would see Australia finally treating asylum seekers with respect and fairness," added Br Peter.

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MEDIA ENQUIRIES: Sylvia MacRitchie-Hook | M: 0410 644 356 | E: [comms@catholicreligious.org.au](mailto:comms@catholicreligious.org.au)