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Catholic Alliance for People Seeking Asylum joins national call for Australian Parliament to pass Urgent Medical Treatment Bill

The Catholic Alliance for People Seeking Asylum (CAPSA), supported by its advisory group of Catholic service provider representatives, has joined with hundreds of other civil society organisations, and thousands of ordinary citizens nationwide, to pledge support for an important Bill that would allow sick people seeking asylum who are trapped on Nauru and in Papua New Guinea, to get the treatment they need.

The Home Affairs Legislation Amendment (Miscellaneous Measures) Bill 2018 - commonly referred to as the Urgent Medical Treatment Bill - is set to be voted on by the House of Representatives in the first sitting week of Parliament, resuming on 12 February. The Bill has passed the Senate, and had majority support in the House of Representatives in December 2018, but was prevented from going to a vote by the Government.

CAPSA is supporting the Bill as it would compel the Federal Government to transfer sick people offshore to Australia for treatment, following review by a panel of doctors appointed by Australia's most prominent medical institutions.

"The Catholic Alliance for People Seeking Asylum believes that people who seek asylum should live in the Australia community with access to work rights, basic services and financial support. We are deeply saddened by the stories that continue to emerge from offshore detention facilities about vulnerable people experiencing a range of mental and physical health issues - when it is Australia's obligation to help, not hinder," says CAPSA chair Julie Edwards.

"The passing of this Bill will mean people in need of medical treatment will be able to obtain it. People's lives depend on it."

A range of civil society groups are calling on the ALP, the Greens, Centre Alliance and the crossbench, including Andrew Wilkie, Kerryn Phelps, Cathy McGowan and Julia Banks, to maintain their support for the Bill to ensure it passes the House of Representatives when it goes to a vote, and enacted into law.

The Morrison Government has stepped up its attack on the Bill over the past week in a last ditch effort to stop it passing.

"Our political leaders need to show true leadership on this issue, and respect the human dignity, health and welfare requirements of people seeking asylum in Australia," says Ms Edwards.

A joint statement from civil society organisations will be delivered to politicians on Monday ahead of the vote, to show the widespread support for the Bill in the community.

“We stand with hundreds of civil society organisations to show our political leaders that it’s time for compassion.”

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