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CAPSA acknowledges 10 years of ‘cruel’ offshore processing, calls on Federal Government to end offshore detention and extend permanent protection

The Catholic Alliance for People Seeking Asylum (CAPSA) says the Federal Government’s decision 10 years ago today to resume offshore processing for people seeking asylum who arrive by boat is a sombre occasion, and calls on the Government to continue recent positive reform of the immigration system by permanently ending offshore detention and extending permanent protection pathways.

Ten years after then-Prime Minister Kevin Rudd resumed offshore processing and announced that people seeking asylum arriving in Australia by boat would never be resettled in Australia – a policy lambasted as ‘cruel’ and ‘inhumane’ by refugee advocates – around 80 people remain in Papua New Guinea, and the Government continues to operate a vacant \$350 million per year detention centre on Nauru under its ongoing commitment to offshore processing.

CAPSA, co-convened by Jesuit Social Services and Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS) Australia, supports individuals, schools, parishes and Catholic organisations across education, health, refugee and social services in their advocacy for fair and humane treatment for people seeking asylum in Australia, has long advocated to permanently abolish offshore processing and support those seeking asylum in the community.

Co-Chairs Julie Edwards, Jesuit Social Services CEO, and Tamara Domicelj, Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS) Australia Country Director, said the Federal Government’s continued commitment to offshore processing is arbitrary and inhumane, and must end alongside a strengthening of permanent protection in Australia.

“The last decade of Australia’s offshore detention system has inflicted horrendous cruelty upon and caused immense harm to adults and children who have sought our protection, in clear violation of our responsibilities and in contrast to our reputation as a just society,” said Ms Domicelj.

“Everyone who seeks safety in Australia deserves a fair and timely assessment of their claims, and our compassion. Australia can and should provide pathways to permanency for all who are owed international protection, including work and study rights as well as access to social security and medical assistance.”

CAPSA welcomed recent immigration reforms by the Federal Government – including the evacuation of all refugees remaining on Nauru, as well as the abolition of temporary protection and safe haven enterprise visas, and establishment of pathways to permanent protection in Australia for 19,000 temporary visa holders – but said more must be done.

“All people seeking asylum deserve a safe and secure future, not a life of being in limbo,” said Ms Edwards.

“We call on the Federal Government to permanently end offshore detention and extend permanent protection so that everyone who seeks safety in Australia can claim their rights and thrive.”



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