Bishops' Committee for Migrants and Refugees

For more information about this committee, please contact the Bishop Secretary using the link below.

Chairman:  Bishop Joseph A Grech DD
Secretary:  Bishop Patrick Dougherty DD
Member:    Bishop Hilton F Deakin DD PhD VG AM
Member:    Bishop Max L Davis AM DD
Member:    Bishop Joseph Oudeman OFM Cap DD

Supervising - Apostleship of the Sea
Supervising - Australian Catholic Migrant and Refugee Office

May 1998

MANDATE

1. To supervise and report to Conference on the work of the Australian Catholic Migrants and Refugees Office.
2. To foster appropriate recognition of, and response to the multicultural nature of the Australian people.
3. To offer comment on Government policy relating to migrants and refugees.
4. To inform and advise Conference on matters relating to Eastern Rite Catholics in Australia, the Apostleship of the Sea, the Pontifical Council for Migrants and Itinerants, the International Catholic Migration Commission and the Diocesan Directors of Migration.
5. To oversee the Pastoral and Foreign Students and Tourists.
6. To support the role of Chaplains to migrant groups.

2006

- Catholic Bishop welcomes government’s withdrawal of offshore processing bill - 14 Aug 2006
The government’s withdrawal of its Off-Shore Processing Bill was a significant event for those who believed in the fair and humane treatment of asylum seekers coming to Australia, Bishop Joseph Grech said today.

2005

- Cardinal Stephen Fumio Hamao’s address to National Conference on the pastoral care of migrants and refugees - 17 Nov 2005
Pastoral Care of People on the Move: Challenges for the Church Today. An opening address by Cardinal Stephen Fumio Hamao, President of the Pontifical Council for the Pastoral Care of Migrants and Itinerant People

- Palmer Inquiry highlights immigration detention inadequacies - Catholic Bishop - 15 Jul 2005
"The report of the Inquiry by Mr Mick Palmer into Immigration Detention has highlighted serious mental health issues within the immigration detention regime," Bishop Joseph Grech, Chairman of the Bishops' Committee for Migrants and Refugees, said today.

- Catholic Bishop welcomes changes to detention system - 20 Jun 2005
Prime Minister John Howard's announcement of changes to immigration detention laws is a welcome step towards a more humane treatment of asylum seekers, a Catholic Bishop said today.
• **Immigration bills signify a welcome change to detention policy – Catholic Bishop** - 27 May 2005
Changes to the Migration Act proposed in two Private Member's Bills signify a compassionate and welcome change to Australia's detention policy and deserve the support of all MPs, a Catholic Bishop said today.

• **Catholic Church welcomes Minister's reconsideration of East Timor asylum cases** - 20 May 2005
The Catholic Church today welcomed a decision by Immigration Minister Amanda Vanstone to reconsider the cases of about 50 East Timorese asylum seekers who had been threatened with deportation.

• **Govt release of some detainees a small but welcome step – Catholic Bishop** - 23 Mar 2005
The federal government's decision to release some long term immigration detainees was a small but welcome step towards a more compassionate detention policy, a Catholic Bishop said today.

• **The Catholic Church and the Australian Nation - Monolithic or Multicultural?** - 1 Mar 2005
Bishop Joseph Grech and Desmond Cahill presented a paper on the multicultural church at the Federation of Ethnic Communities' Councils of Australia (FECCA) Conference in February 2005.

**2004**

• **Catholic Bishop expresses concern at Baxter situation** - 10 Dec 2004
Bishop Joseph Grech, Chairman of the Catholic Bishops' Committee for Migrants and Refugees, today expressed sorrow and concern at the current situation at Baxter Immigration Detention Centre in South Australia.

• **Visa changes need to go further - Catholic Church** - 25 Aug 2004
The federal government's decision to allow some refugees on Temporary Protection Visas to apply for permanent residency was a welcome move but needed to go further, a Catholic Bishop said today.

• **Catholic Church welcomes change of heart on protection visas** - 13 Jul 2004
The federal government's decision to allow 9,500 people on Temporary Protection Visas to apply for permanent visas was an important and compassionate change of policy, the Catholic Church said today.

• **Catholic Bishops call for urgent response to the needs of asylum seekers and refugees** - 14 May 2004
The Catholic Bishops of Australia have issued a statement in which they call for the Government and all Australians to respond with urgency to the needs of asylum seekers and refugees.

• **New policy on Iranian asylum seekers encouraging** - Catholic Bishop - 17 Feb 2004
Reports that the federal government was no longer forcing failed Iranian asylum seekers to return home to possible persecution highlighted an encouraging development in immigration policy, a Catholic Bishop said today.

**2003**

• **Reports of self-harm on Nauru sad but not surprising - Catholic Bishop** - 19 Dec 2003
Reports of self-harm by a number of Afghan people being held in detention on Nauru
were sad but not surprising, and highlighted the need for an end to the government’s so-called Pacific Solution, a Catholic bishop said today.

- Catholic Church body urges Senate to let East Timorese stay - 6 Mar 2003
  The Australian Catholic Migrant and Refugee Office today urged Senators to support a move which would allow about 1,600 East Timorese asylum seekers to stay permanently in Australia.

- Catholic Archbishop calls on Ruddock to let the East Timorese stay - 18 Feb 2003
  Australian Catholic Bishops' Conference President, Archbishop Francis Carroll has written to Immigration Minister Philip Ruddock with an urgent plea to allow a group of East Timorese asylum seekers to stay in Australia.

2002

- Catholic Church welcomes move to free children from detention - 4 Dec 2002

- Statement on asylum seekers in detention - 29 Nov 2002
  Australia's Catholic Bishops wish to express their ongoing concern at the incarceration of children in detention centres.

- CHURCH AGENCIES REPEAT CALL: "LET EAST TIMORESE STAY" - 15 Nov 2002
  Two organisations of the Australian Catholic Bishops' Conference today renewed calls to the Minister for Immigration, Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs, to grant residency to 1,800 East Timorese asylum seekers who are facing deportation. The renewed calls from Caritas Australia and the Australian Catholic Social Justice Council come following last week's notification of 84 Timorese that their visa applications were unsuccessful and they had 28 days to leave Australia.

- Catholic Bishops Call On Prayers For East Timor As They Celebrate Independence - 14 May 2002
  To celebrate the independence of East Timor on Monday 20 May 2002, the Australian Catholic Bishops are inviting all Australians to pause in prayer and Thanksgiving.

- Bishops statement on Refugees and Asylum Seekers commended by the Vatican - 13 May 2002
  The Australian Catholic Bishops' Conference recent statement on Refugees and Asylum Seekers has been praised by the Pontifical Council for the Pastoral Care of Migrants and Itinerants.

- Australian Bishops speak out on Refugees and Asylum Seekers - 26 Mar 2002
  Archbishop Francis P Carroll, President of the Australian Catholic Bishops' Conference, today released a Statement on behalf of the ACBC.

- Australian Bishops call for Action on Asylum Seekers - 29 Jan 2002
  The President of the Australian Catholic Bishops' Conference, Archbishop Francis P Carroll, has called on the Australian Government to re-assess procedures dealing with the asylum seekers in the detention centres.

- Catholic Bishops Give Support to International Cooperation in Helping Refugees and Asylum Seekers - 30 Nov 2001
  The Australian Catholic Bishops Conference welcomes the news that Australia and
Indonesia will work together to focus international attention on refugees and asylum seekers.

- **Tampa's innocent pawns in a messy game** - 31 Aug 2001  
  President of the Australian Catholic Bishops' Conference, Archbishop Francis Carroll, calls on the Australian Government to rethink its current response to the refugee crisis involving the Tampa in waters off the North West Coast of Australia.

- **A statement from the Bishops' Committee for Migrants and Refugees on the plight of asylum seekers on the Tampa** - 29 Aug 2001  
  Chairman of the Catholic Bishops' Committee for Migrants and Refugees, Bishop Patrick Dougherty, today expressed great distress that the Norwegian ship Tampa has been refused entry to Australia.

- **Catholic Bishops advise on the Care of Migrants and Refugees** - 11 Jul 2001  
  A Statement on the Pastoral Care of Migrants and Refugees will be launched today by the President of the Australian Catholic Bishops' Conference, Archbishop Francis P. Carroll, at 11am at Favier House in Canberra today.

- **Government should re-think migration quota for refugees** - 10 May 2001  
  The Federal Government would enhance its public profile if it were to reconsider the quota it has forecast for its humanitarian Program for the next twelve months according to the Bishops' Committee for Migrants and Refugees.

**2000**

- **Australian identity crisis identified at Multiculturalism Conference** - 10 Jul 2000
- **Minister Ruddock to attend Catholic organised Conference on Multiculturalism** - 6 Jun 2000
- **Communities of Faith Working Together in Multicultural Australia** - 30 May 2000
- **Registrations for Multiculturalism Conference now open** - 15 Mar 2000

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**Australian Catholic Migrant and Refugee Office**

**Director:** Rev John Murphy  
**Address:** Favier House, 1 Ballumbir Street, Braddon 2612  
**Postal Address:** GPO Box 2720, Canberra ACT 2601  
**Tel:** (02) 6201 9848  
**Fax:** (02) 6247 7466  
**Email:** director@acmro.catholic.org.au  
**Web Site:** http://www.acmro.catholic.org.au

**Supervised by - Bishops' Committee for Migrants and Refugees**

**The Role of ACMRO**

The Australian Catholic Migrant and Refugee Office (ACMRO) was established by the Australian Catholic Bishops' Conference on 1 July 1995. It took the place of two previous Conference bodies - The Federal Catholic Immigration Committee, and The Australian Catholic Refugee Office - and assumed many of their functions. The Office is responsible to the ACBC through the Bishops' Committee for Migrants and Refugees. The work of the Office can best be described by the mandate which it has been given by the Bishops:

- To advise and serve the Australian Catholic Bishops' Conference at both a national and international level on migrant and refugee issues, including the development of Church policy.
- To act as an official Church voice as approved by the Bishops' Conference on issues relating to migrants and refugees.
- To act as a channel of communication between Diocesan Offices and the Bishops' Conference.
- To provide a mechanism for effective consultation and coordination among Catholic bodies and other groups involved in migrant and refugee activities.
- To make appropriate representation to Government and other bodies on matters relating to migrants and refugees.

Welcome to the Australian Migrant & Refugee Office

Role of ACMRO | Contacts | Links | What's New

Media Releases | Newsletter | Policies & Papers

Refugee and Migrant Sunday | Labour Agreement

Statement on the Pastoral Care of Migrants and Refugees

**Refugee and Migrant Sunday 2006**

Message from Pope Benedict XVI... (pdf)

Message from Rev Bishop Grech... (pdf)

Message from ACMRO... (pdf)

Liturgy Notes for Refugee & Migrant Sunday... (pdf)

National Conference on Pastoral Care in A Culturally Diverse Australia

**Govt release of some detainees a small but welcome step – Catholic Bishop**

A Message from the Australian Catholic Bishops' Conference, May 2004

Message of the Holy Father John Paul II
for the 91st World Day of Migrants and Refugees (2005)

Pontifical Council for the Pastoral Care of Migrants and Itinerant People
the love of Christ towards Migrants (PDF)
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Mission Statement for the Australian Catholic Migrant and Refugee Office

We, the staff of the Australian Catholic Migrant and Refugee Office, dedicate our efforts towards the acceptance and settlement of Refugees and Migrants into Australia. We do this especially by our efforts to influence Government policies in this area. We also seek to form Catholic Church policy in Australia for the Pastoral Care of Refugees and Migrants.

Refugees and asylum seekers merit our special consideration. We undertake this special service in their regard, irrespective of their creed or origin.
Within our capacity and limited resources, we commit ourselves to this mission of care and support in every possible way.

We believe that this work reflects the Church’s universal compassion for those in need. Christ himself, and his Vicars on earth (the Popes), have often told us this.

On October 21, 1993, Pope John Paul 2 said: “The Church’s social teaching supports the dignity and rights of people on the move and demands that adequate solutions be found for the suffering that forces people to flee their homes. It also demands that governments protect and care for foreigners in their nations.

For Jesus, the stranger who asks for hospitality, or the immigrant who asks for acceptance, is a member of the same family... to accept the other means to make space for him in one's city, in one's laws, in one's time, and in one's circle of friends”. (Plenary meeting of the Pontifical Council for the Pastoral Care of Migrants and Itinerant People — October 21, 1993.)

POLICIES, PAPERS & SUBMISSIONS

Submissions

- Submission to the Consultation on 2004/2005 Humanitarian Program
- Submission to the Consultation on 2003/2004 Humanitarian Program
- Submission to the Consultation on the 2002/2003 Migration and Humanitarian Programs
- Submission to the Consultation on the 2001/2002 Migration and Humanitarian Programs
- Submission to the Consultation on the 2000/2001 Migration and Humanitarian Programs
- Submission to the Consultation on the 1999/2000 Migration and Humanitarian Programs

Submissions to the Senate

- Protocol to prevent, suppress and punish trafficking in persons, especially women and children...
- Joint Standing Committee - Migration Bill No.2
- ‘Migration Legislation Amendment (Further Border Protection Measures) Bill 2002
- Senate inquiry into a certain maritime incident: the so-called 'children overboard' incident and 'the Pacific Solution'
- Senate Committee inquiry into the Operation of Australia's Refugee and Humanitarian Program
  Family and Community Services Legislation Amendment (Special Benefit Activity Test) Bill 2002

- Review of Migration Regulation 4.31 B (RRT $1000 Fee)
Conference Papers

The Catholic Church and The Australian Nation - Monolithic or Multicultural?
Joseph Grech and Desmond Cahill

Talk by Fr John Murphy Commentary on "The Love of Christ towards Migrants
"Erga Migrantes Caritas Christi"
(pdf)

Building Bridges Conference Papers
Conference Outcomes form the Refugee Convention - Where to from Here?
University of New South Wales from 6th - 9th December. The draft was forwarded to the UNHCR for the Ministerial Meeting, Geneva.
You will need Adobe Acrobat Reader to view this file. (File size: 44.3KB)
UNHCR - Ministerial Summit, December 2001 - to commemorate the signing of the 1951 Refugee Convention on the Status of Refugees. Ministerial reports are available at the
UNHCR web site - 'News'

'Building Bridges' Conference
Conference Papers

Policies
Response by Minister Philip Ruddock to the ACBC Statement on Refugees and Asylum Seekers with Comments by the Australian Catholic Migrant and Refugee Officer (pdf)
Statement on the Pastoral Care of Migrants and Refugees by the Australian Catholic Bishops' Conference - May 2000
Bishop's Statement on Refugees and Asylum Seekers
People Smuggling Position Paper
ACMRO response to One Nations Immigration policy
Background Paper on Asylum Seekers in Australia
Position Paper on Asylum Seekers

Reports
ACMRO Report: November 2003 – March 2004

Statement on the Pastoral Care of Migrants and Refugees by the Australian Catholic Bishops' Conference - May 2000