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Australia’s leaders must develop more humane responses to people seeking protection: Catholic Alliance for People Seeking Asylum

The Catholic Alliance for People Seeking Asylum (CAPSA) has today issued an open letter to Australia’s political leaders urging them to develop more humane responses towards people seeking protection in Australia.

The letter, sent to Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull, Opposition Leader Bill Shorten, Minister for Immigration and Border Protection Peter Dutton, Shadow Minister for Immigration and Border Protection Richard Marles and Greens senators Richard Di Natale and Sarah Hanson-Young, follows the Catholic Bishops of Australia listing the treatment of refugees and people seeking asylum as their number one issue of concern.

“One of the most pressing issues in Australia from an ethical and moral perspective is the treatment of people seeking protection in Australia,” reads the letter.

“We, as members of the Catholic community, in schools, parishes, hospitals and other organisations are very concerned. Although interdiction has stopped more people coming by boat to Australian territory, those who have tried are still being punished and denied any hope of finding a new life in Australia.”

The Alliance says that in the lead-up to the Federal Election, it is urging voters to consider the voiceless people trapped in the harsh conditions arising from Australia’s immigration processes.

CAPSA was formed in response to intense concern about the conditions for people seeking asylum in Australia, in stark contrast to the core Gospel-teachings and words of Pope Francis and the Catholic Bishops.

CAPSA was founded by Jesuit Social Services and Cabrini Health, and its advisory group includes peak bodies and key organisations such as Catholic Health Australia, Catholic Social Services Australia, Caritas Australia and St Vincent de Paul Society.

The Alliance is guided by a number of principles and policy positions including that offshore, mandatory and indefinite detention are wrong; that people seeking asylum in Australia should live in the Australian community and that those living in the community should have the right to work, access to basic services and to some financial support if they cannot find work.

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