



AUSTRALIAN CATHOLIC BISHOPS CONFERENCE

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Changes to asylum processing a step backwards – Catholic Bishop

The federal government's move to process all asylum seekers offshore was a step backwards and placed Australia's international obligations at risk, a Catholic bishop said today.

Bishop Joseph Grech, the Chairman of the Bishops' Committee for Migrants and Refugees, said Australians would be shocked and disappointed if the government's new policy saw children especially again being sent to detention centres.

"Last year, the community spoke out very loudly and clearly in support of removing children from detention centres," Bishop Grech said.

"The government listened to the people and acted humanely to free children.

"Now, seemingly because of external pressure, the government is reversing its decision and planning to process all asylum claims in offshore centres"

Bishop Grech said that the West Papuan asylum seekers granted temporary visas this month had been assessed by the proper authorities and found to have genuine claims.

"We simply shouldn't be in a position where pressure from foreign governments leads to changes in our own immigration policy," he said.

"I call on the prime minister to reconsider the planned policy change and to fulfil Australia's international asylum processing obligations on our own soil, treating those who seek our protection with the care and dignity they deserve."

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