

Media Release: 8 September, 2015

AUSTRALIA NEEDS TO PLAY ITS PART TO BETTER ASSIST REFUGEES

Australians were moved by pictures of a Syrian toddler, Aylan Kurdi, whose tiny body was found on a beach last week. He is one of 15 million refugees and 45 million people currently displaced by conflict around the world.

Caritas Australia, the Catholic Church's international aid and development agency, joined with the thousands of Australians who rallied yesterday seeking a more compassionate response by Australia's political leaders to the plight of over 4 million Syrian people who have had to flee their country due to civil war.

Caritas Australia is part of one of the world's largest humanitarian networks and has contributed over \$100 million to assist Syrian refugees since the start of the civil war.

Bishop Greg O'Kelly, Chairman of Caritas Australia, said that "Australians are good and compassionate people. Yet our leaders are not playing an adequate part in the global response to the Syrian crisis".

"This week Pope Francis called on all of us to be better neighbours to those in desperate need. This has been one of his main messages since he visited an Italian centre for refugees at Lampedusa two years ago. At that time he urged us all to stop looking the other way and to become active in directly supporting our suffering brothers and sister who have been displaced by conflict."

"In referring to Australia's policies, our leaders tend to forget just how much support is being provided by countries that are far poorer than Australia. Currently, one quarter of Lebanon's population are refugees. Nearly 20% of Jordan's population are refugees and Germany has just committed to taking 800,000 refugees," he said.

"For one of the world's wealthiest countries, Australia's current refugee intake of 13,750 does not reflect the compassion and concern of the Australian people."

"On the 20th anniversary of Australia's introduction of mandatory detention for asylum seekers arriving by boats, it is time for Australia to increase the number of refugees it takes substantially and end the cruel policies supported by both sides of Australian politics."

Together with its many Caritas sister agencies, Caritas Australia will keep up its direct humanitarian assistance to Syrian refugees and to the large number of displaced people within Syria and neighbouring countries.

This issue will be highlighted at the launch of the Australian Catholic Bishops Commission Social Justice Statement on Wednesday September 9 "*For Those Who've Come Across the Seas.*"

For media wishing to attend the launch contact the ACSJC on 02-8306 3499/www.acsjc.org.au.

Caritas media contact: Nicole Clements on 0408 869 833 or media@caritas.org.au.

Child Protection Sunday



We all know our diocese has made huge mistakes in the past and failed to protect those who were most vulnerable under our pastoral care. It is clear now that the protection of the vulnerable needs to be at the forefront of our diocese and parish. There have been a large number of documents produced by, both the Catholic Church in Australia, and by our Ballarat Diocese which has helped inform us of our shortcomings of the past and guide the improvements that had to be made.

Our diocese has done much work to implement policies and procedures over the last few years. We as a parish community, are committed to these policies and procedures and determined that all parishioners will be safe in our care. This includes, but is not limited to, Working With Children Check's for all involved with ministry to the vulnerable, policies relating to having more than one adult at all times when supervising children, ensuring an open environment in situations such as reconciliation and modifying facilities to cater for this. A large number of parishioners will shortly undertake an online training course to further educate us around our responsibilities working with children and mandatory reporting.

By focussing on protecting the vulnerable we do not take away the pain and suffering of those victims of abuse whom we know still suffer so much today.

Fundamentally we want to ensure that the crimes of the past are never repeated in our parish. We are all responsible for this and ask that you support our initiatives to do this as they arise.

Kind Regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'John Hockey', written over a white background.

John Hockey

Parish Manager