

WORLD REFUGEE WEEK

Catholic Religious Australia speak out for “the need to belong”

As the leaders of Catholic Religious Australia (CRA) gather this week at their National Assembly, they stand in strong solidarity with the many asylum seekers and refugees for whom this year’s World Refugee Week theme of ‘the need to belong’ is clearly under threat in the face of the most recent Government legislation.

Last year the government announced an end to Status Resolution Support Services (SRSS) for several thousand asylum seekers on bridging visas, to come into effect in 2018. This action removes financial support and accommodation for some of the most vulnerable people in Australia – people who are already experiencing immense suffering.

Religious leaders are deeply troubled by this unjust treatment of asylum seekers and refugees.

CRA is opposed to the government’s policy on four grounds:

- It is an **abandonment** of our nation’s moral responsibility for some of the most vulnerable people in the world
- It is a direct **contradiction** of human rights and our responsibilities as a member of the global community
- It models **violence** towards persons as a solution to problems
- It is an **erosion** of the Australian values of a fair go for all, and concern for the underdog.

‘To remain passive and silent in the face of the injustice we are witnessing at this time would be contrary to the values we hold as Australians, and as Christians’, said Sr Ruth Durick, current president of CRA. ‘There is a strong belief that we are impelled to stand in solidarity with people in need, those who are victims of all kinds of abuse under these laws, and to work alongside political, church and community organisations to address this current crisis.’

We did it before when we welcomed thousands of refugees from post-war Europe, Vietnam, East Timor, El Salvador, Bosnia and many other countries. We can do it again.

CRA is urging political leaders of all Parties to come together to arrive at a multi-partisan solution, which puts morality, justice and human values at the heart of its legislation and political decisions for asylum seekers and refugees.