



Sisters of Saint Joseph *of the Sacred Heart*

JOSEPHITES DISMAYED BY TREATMENT OF BILOELA FAMILY

The Sisters of St Joseph are deeply disturbed by the treatment of the Biloele family and call on the Minister to personally intervene before injustice becomes tragedy.

Three of the four members of the Murugappan family have been granted 12 month bridging visas, but there is no visa for Thanicaa, their youngest daughter

This means that the family will not be able to return to their home in Biloele but must remain in community detention in Perth.

“The treatment of the Biloele family is symbolic of the thousands of people cruelly disadvantaged by Australia’s refugee detention system,” said Sr Monica Cavanagh, Congregational Leader of the Sisters of Saint Joseph.

“This family is the public face of the Australian Government’s unjust and callous treatment of people seeking protection in this land.”

The imprisonment of the Biloele family’s two children, both of whom were born in Australia, is in direct contravention of the United Nation’s Convention on the Rights of the Child.

In this case, as in so many others, the Australian government continues to violate its international treaty obligations under the Refugee Convention and contravenes the UN provisions for the protection of those seeking asylum.

Australia has not had arrivals by sea in the past two years, but people seeking asylum here haven’t stopped suffering anguish, illness, and in some cases dying – clear evidence of the retaliatory deterrence regime Australia has created for unauthorised (not ‘illegal’) maritime arrivals.

According to official figures, keeping this one family from Biloele in detention on Christmas Island has cost \$6.7 million of taxpayers’ money since 2019.

“The Murugappan family is well-supported across Australia and is loved by the Biloele community in which they were active members prior to this disaster,” Sr Monica said.

“We know that the Home Affairs’ Minister has the power necessary to intervene in this situation and call on her to grant permanent visas for this family.”

As Josephites, the dignity of the human person is at the heart of our worldview and our faith. The ongoing detention of this family seriously erodes the reputation of our country as a place of justice and compassion.

“As Sisters of St Joseph, called by Pope Francis to be models of compassion in this Year of Joseph, who was himself a refugee, it is our duty to stand with those pushed to the edge of our society by Australia’s unjust immigration detention regime”, said Sr Monica.

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