

## “OF CURRENT INTEREST”

### a Person, a Story, one Welcoming the Other

We are called to offer the gift of hope in challenging times.

#### Called to Respond

The Institute of Sisters of Mercy of Australia and Papua New Guinea is committed to its on-going support of and, advocacy for people who are displaced in local and global situations. Sisters continue responding as they:

- offer pastoral care for people in Australian Immigration Detention facilities and for asylum seekers living in the community;
- advocate for changes to government policy and also advocate for individual asylum seekers;
- enhance action by networking with other organisations;
- unite in prayer for people seeking a compassionate and safe place.

*If we wish to sow the seeds of real hope in our world, I think Catherine McAuley would say: This is the way we must do it – one person at a time: one answering of the figurative doorbell, one opening of the figurative door, one embrace of the stranger, one welcoming of the other, one sharing of our bread and milk – one person at a time”*

“Welcoming the Stranger: the Kenosis of Catherine McAuley”, Mary Sullivan RSM

The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) is concerned for the more than 42 million people who have been displaced. There are more than 15 million people who have officially registered with the UNHCR. Does it astound you that less than 1% of UNHCR refugees are resettled in any year?

**Refugee Council of Australia** <http://www.refugeecouncil.org.au> CEO, Paul Power, said that, *while the Government’s decision today (7/5/2013) to grant bridging visas to asylum seeker families who arrived by boat was preferable to leaving them indefinitely in detention, denying work rights would create hardship... and exacerbated the fragile mental health of people who have already been brutalised, persecuted...*

An asylum seeker is a person who has sought protection as a refugee, but whose claim for refugee status has not yet been assessed. Many refugees have at some point been asylum seekers, that is, they have lodged an individual claim for protection and have had that claim assessed by a government or UNHCR.

**Australian Human Rights Commission** <http://www.humanrights.gov.au/>

8 May 2013: *The Commission has urged the federal Government not to detain asylum seeker families at high security immigration detention facilities. Additionally, where they are granted bridging visas to live in the community, they should be provided with work rights and adequate support.*

*Commission President, Professor Gillian Triggs, said she has serious concerns about the Government’s announcement that families with children will be detained at the Curtin and Wickham Point detention facilities.*

The publication, **Human rights standards for immigration detention**, sets out benchmarks for the humane treatment of people held in immigration detention and states:

*Immigration detainees should enjoy the least restrictive environment possible, and the maxim that human rights are a floor, not a ceiling, should be at the forefront of decisions relating to conditions of detention for immigration detainees.*

#### Further Information and Resources:

**Australian Government DIAC, Immigration Detention Statistics** <http://www.immi.gov.au/managing-australias-borders/detention/facilities/statistics/>

**A Just Australia** <http://www.ajustaustralia.com/>

**Mercy Works, Refugee Support, Mercy Connect** <http://mercyworks.org.au/what-we-do/refugee-support/>

**Asylum Seeker Resource Centre** <http://www.asrc.org.au/>

*Right to Work Campaign* <http://righttowork.com.au/>

*CLRI-NSW* [http://clrinsw.org/current/soc\\_just/sj\\_130402.pdf](http://clrinsw.org/current/soc_just/sj_130402.pdf)

*Road to Refuge* <http://www.roadtorefuge.com/>

*International Detention Coalition* <http://idcoalition.org/>

*Jesuit Refugee Service* <http://www.jrs.org.au/>

*Out of Sight, In Our Minds* <http://www.outofsight.org.au/>

### **Take Action**

Inform politicians if you are concerned for asylum seekers: **Contact Senators and Members**

[http://www.aph.gov.au/Senators\\_and\\_Members](http://www.aph.gov.au/Senators_and_Members)