



INSTITUTE OF  
**SISTERS of MERCY**  
OF AUSTRALIA & PAPUA NEW GUINEA

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## **Demanding an Ethical Response for Asylum Seekers**

The Leader of the Institute of Sisters of Mercy of Australia and Papua New Guinea, Sister Berneice Loch RSM expresses deep distress at the Australian government's most recent decision for all asylum seekers arriving in Australian waters by boat to be transported to Papua New Guinea for processing of their claims and the resettlement of refugees.

"Our Sisters continue to vehemently condemn such actions which increase the suffering and anguish of asylum seekers and, simultaneously diminish our common humanity. Together with all people of good-will we seek an end to the inhumane treatment of asylum seekers" said Sister Berneice.

Sisters of Mercy have lived and worked in Papua New Guinea for more than 50 years and are outraged by the Australian government's decision to request the PNG government to implement the latest policy. We are concerned about the impact on the residents as the PNG government struggles to offer adequate health, education and housing services, law and order for its own residents. This Arrangement which takes the focus away from Australia's obligations to the UN Refugee Convention also increases the anxiety of asylum seekers and results in further deterioration of physical and psychological well-being.

In his article, ***Faith in Politics***, published in **The Monthly** October 2006, Kevin Rudd stated, *Another great challenge of our age is asylum seekers. The biblical injunction to care for the stranger in our midst is clear. The parable of the Good Samaritan is but one of many which deal with the matter of how we should respond to a vulnerable stranger in our midst... We should never forget that the reason we have a UN convention on the protection of refugees is in large part because of the horror of the Holocaust, when the West (including Australia) turned its back on the Jewish people of Germany and the other occupied countries of Europe who sought asylum during the '30s.*

The Institute of Sisters of Mercy of Australia and Papua New Guinea appeals to Prime Minister Rudd to give witness to his beliefs and garner the Australian political parties to address this complex situation through a hospitable and ethical response with respect for the human dignity of the individual.

Sister Berneice Loch RSM

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