



We're for **fair policies for** refugees and people seeking asylum.

I express my solidarity with migrants around the world and thank all those who help them: welcoming others means welcoming God in person!
Pope Francis

The Institute of the Sisters of Mercy of Australia and Papua New Guinea is a Catholic women's religious congregation. In furthering our mission of Mercy we partner with lay women and men. For more than 40 years, Sisters of Mercy have worked with asylum seekers, refugees, and trafficked persons. We have accompanied these people in refugee camps, detention centres and in the community as part of our mission of sharing God's transforming mercy.

We have witnessed at first hand the harmful impact of government policies on the lives of people who have sought refuge and asylum in Australia. We are calling for policy reform in the following areas to restore Australia's international standing as a nation of the 'fair go' and to bring significant benefits to the Australian economy.

The following five main issues must be urgently addressed:

- ✓ **An immediate expansion of our annual refugee humanitarian visa intake** - so that we can generously respond to crises - in the Ukraine, Afghanistan and other countries. Currently our intake numbers are the lowest in 45 years.
- ✓ **An end to arbitrary detention for onshore and offshore refugees** - It is beyond shameful that people who have sought safety in Australia have been detained, many for up to ten years, and yet there is still no plan for a permanent home for many. The Department of Home Affairs' figures show that more than \$573,000 per person per year is being spent on keeping individuals in offshore detention.
- ✓ **Replacing Temporary Protection Visas with a pathway to permanency** - The current system of Temporary Protection Visas and Safe Haven Enterprise Visas do not provide a clear pathway to a permanent visa. The lack of a pathway to permanency prolongs uncertainty, psychological distress and financial insecurity.
- ✓ **A fair and just process for people seeking asylum living in our community** - this means income support, continual access to Medicare and a reasonable timeframe for claims for protection to be processed. Many of the people we support have been waiting for more than five years without an outcome, with many living in destitution suffering poor physical and mental health.
- ✓ **Improving access to tertiary education for refugees and people seeking asylum** - a thriving economy needs a skilled workforce. Tertiary education is a way to enable people seeking asylum to contribute significantly to the Australian economy. The Australian Government currently requires those on temporary visas to pay international student fees to study at a tertiary level. These fees are prohibitively expensive.

institute.mercy.org.au

(Sources: Sisters of Mercy, Justice for Refugees South Australia and Asylum Seekers Centre Sydney)