

For immediate release

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**CATHOLICS IN COALITION FOR JUSTICE AND PEACE CONDEMN PRIME MINISTER RUDD'S
ASYLUM SEEKER POLICY**

Prime Minister Kevin Rudd's extreme Pacific Solution is a dangerous and parochial response to what is a toxic debate on asylum seekers in Australia. Dumping thousands of displaced people on Papua New Guinea has all the hallmarks of an election quick fix, and takes little account of the risks to our democratically and socially fragile nearest neighbour.

PNG has myriad internal challenges. Poverty and social unrest remain widespread. Crime is rampant; even the streets of central Port Moresby are unsafe after dark. It is unclear how PNG can offer a safe or stable life to thousands of refugees.

Sister Anne Lane, Convenor of CCJP, has just returned from PNG and saw firsthand how unprepared that nation is to deal with Australia's failure to take on its UN Refugee Convention obligations for asylum seekers and refugees.

"The poverty in PNG is apparent from the moment one steps out of the International Airport. Only a few towns have electricity, running water and sewerage services. Even in these places, electrical and phone systems regularly break down," said Sister Anne Lane."

Pledging that 'beginning immediately' asylum seekers without visas will not be granted settlement in Australia takes no account of PNG's slow progress constructing its Manus Island camp. Accommodating the same number of asylum seekers as are on Christmas Island could take months, if not years.

Mr Rudd's policy can only be implemented at enormous human cost. On the grounds of humanity, compassion and basic human rights CCJP rejects this policy of Prime Minister Rudd.

It is the fellowship of the Cross to experience the burden of the other. If one does not experience it, the fellowship he belongs to is not Christian. If any member refuses to bear that burden, he denies the law of Christ The Cost of Discipleship, Dietrich Bonhoeffer

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