



JOINT MEDIA STATEMENT

ACOSS, Australian Council for International Development, Anglicare Australia, Catholic Social Services Australia, Mission Australia, Oxfam Australia, St Vincent de Paul Society, Save the Children, and World Vision.

4 February 2016

AUSTRALIA'S INTERNATIONAL AID AND COMMUNITY SECTOR BACKS CHURCH SANCTUARY OFFER FOR ASYLUM SEEKERS

Australian international aid and community sector agencies today united behind churches across the country who are opening their doors to asylum seekers facing removal back to offshore detention centres.

The groups, including ACOSS, Australian Council for International Development, Anglicare Australia, Catholic Social Services, Mission Australia, Oxfam Australia, St Vincent de Paul Society, Save the Children, and World Vision, urge the Australian government to allow the families and their children to stay in Australia.

"The High Court of Australia may have ruled against the challenge to the legality of our offshore detention centres, but what's at stake here is the safety and wellbeing of traumatised and vulnerable people, including 37 babies and 54 children. This goes beyond technical legalities, it's about our humanity, our morals and values, our human rights obligations and what's the right humanitarian thing to do," said ACFID Chief Executive Officer, Mr Marc Purcell.

"We are a wealthy nation made up of people who have been welcomed from all around the world. It is certainly within our capacity and our moral duty to provide these people sanctuary," said ACOSS CEO Cassandra Goldie.

"We remain opposed to offshore processing, and urge the Federal Government to immediately move to process the outstanding applications of asylum seekers and provide safe haven here in Australia. Our services are offered to provide assistance to the families and their children to enable them stay in Australia, out of harm's way."

"Australia's churches, community sector and broader civil society are ready and able to welcome and ensure the proper care and protection of this small group of people and children. We have housing, community, employment and faith networks that will ensure people seeking asylum in Australia are safe and integrate successfully into the Australian community. We call on the Government to work with us to ensure Australia fulfils its humanitarian obligations," Dr Goldie said.

"Aid agencies have staff who are highly experienced in working with refugees in places like Afghanistan and with the Syrians displaced by war. They also have staff that specialise in working with families and children suffering from trauma. Many of our member agencies can support the churches offering sanctuary with this range of expertise," said Mr Purcell.

For interviews with Marcelle Mogg, CEO, CSSA: contact Lil Bryant-Johnson 0450 30 20 20