

Media Release: Australian Churches Refugee Taskforce calls for transparency for offshore refugee solutions

June 19th June 2019: The Australian Churches' Refugee Taskforce (ACRT)

In the wake of recent reports of increases in self harm and distress in Nauru and particularly on Manus Island, PNG, the ACRT is deeply concerned that there are still no transparent solutions for safely re-settling all vulnerable people in both locations.

Taskforce Chair, the Mr Rob Floyd:

"The transfers of people to safe dignified locations that have occurred to date are welcome. But the damage that has been done to people in these locations over the past six years continues and is increasing. The current situation for vulnerable refugees and asylum seekers is completely unacceptable. I call on the government of Australia to be transparent about the situation on Manus and Nauru in regard to these reports."

Numerous studies have shown that prolonged detention and uncertain timeframes when applying for refugee status, results in significant adverse mental health impact and financial cost for rehabilitation years after people are released.

The impact of trauma if it remains unresolved for survivors, can directly impact the next generation. The harm being done to refugees in Nauru and on Manus Island, PNG may have long lasting affects for families well beyond the time people are re-settled safely.

Taskforce Deputy Chair, Ms Carmen Lazar:

"We have seen the intergenerational impact of trauma for refugees arriving in Australia from refugee camps around the world and for those in Nauru and on Manus Island there is no difference. Yet this situation is entirely preventable and now is the time for transparency on how this situation is going to be resolved."

The ACRT supports the recent calls from the Governor of the Manus Province, Charlie Benjamin, calling for action from the Australian Government and the Chief Inspector Yapu, who is concerned that the situation is increasing beyond the control of the Province.

The ACRT acknowledges the local challenges faced by communities hosting refugees. Despite the local hospitality that has been provided, the situation is well beyond the capacity of a small community not familiar with extensive experiences of self-harm, psychological distress and trauma related hospital admissions.

Taskforce Chair, Mr. Rob Floyd:

"The time for political point-scoring has passed. These reports of self-harm and the pleas of our friends in PNG cannot be ignored. Transparent solutions, with bipartisan support, must be brought forward to prevent further harm as a matter of urgency."

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