



Catholic Religious Australia
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Submission to the Senate Standing Committee on Legal and Constitutional Affairs - *Inquiry into the Migration Amendment (Unauthorised Maritime Arrivals and Other Measures) Bill 2012*

Catholic Religious Australia (CRA) is the peak body for leaders of Religious Institutes and Societies of Apostolic Life resident in Australia. Our membership comprises more than 180 congregations of over 8,000 Sisters, Brothers and Religious Priests living and working in all states and territories, as well as many people working in organisations run by religious institutes.

Many Catholic Religious visit the detention centres where people seeking asylum are detained and walk with them when they are released into the community. They hear their stories and witness the trauma caused by having to leave their homelands and embark on perilous and long journeys in the hope of finding freedom.

A number of CRA members and their colleagues work on a daily basis with asylum seekers and refugees and are committed to a humane, compassionate and generous treatment of asylum seekers, recognising their dignity and aware of the contribution asylum seekers have made to Australian society over the years.

In comparison with many countries in the world, the numbers seeking asylum in Australia are quite small.

CRA recognises that the urgency around the issue has been exacerbated by the drownings at sea, yet these people must be desperate to attempt long and hazardous boat journeys.

CRA endorses the submission made by the NSW Conference of Leaders of Religious Institutes, (CLRI NSW).

We join with CLRI NSW in noting that the aim of the *Migration Amendment Bill 2012* appears primarily to be directed at countering people smugglers and deterring people seeking asylum from arriving in Australia by boat.

With CLRI NSW, CRA endeavours to view asylum seekers through a moral lens and is, therefore, opposed to the Migration Amendment Bill 2012.

What is needed is a long term solution that protects the human rights of all people seeking asylum and treats them with dignity and respect.