



Anglican Bishop Urges Federal M.P's to Urgently Remove Asylum Seeker Families from Nauru

Australia's newest Anglican bishop, a former practising psychologist, has called on Federal Parliamentarians to immediately remove all asylum seeker children and their families from Nauru.

The Bishop of Grafton, the Rt Rev Dr Murray Harvey says it is essential that asylum seeker children and their families be placed in appropriate settings to protect and improve their physical and mental health.

He has written, personally, to Members of the House of Representatives whose electorates are in the Northern Rivers expressing his views.

His action follows a report by the Australian Psychological Society highlighting the danger to the mental health of asylum seekers by being held in off-shore detention centres.

"There is always a heightened risk of mental health problems amongst refugees, given the traumatic nature of the refugee experience," Dr Harvey said.

"For those placed in detention, particularly children, the problem is much worse and reports indicate that the situation on Nauru has reached a crisis point.

"A recent Australian Medical Association report based on the experiences of medical staff who have worked on Nauru describes the situation there as a humanitarian emergency requiring urgent intervention.

"This echoes calls from the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) that endorse the relocation of all refugees and asylum seekers in PNG and Nauru as a matter of urgency.

"The government's narrative that off shore detention will "stop the boats" is no justification for the inhumane and hugely detrimental effects caused by offshore processing.

"Australia is a caring nation and we should be able to offer protection to survivors of war and persecution. What we need is courageous and compassionate leadership on this issue."

Dr Harvey said that his parish in Brisbane, St Mark's Clayfield, supported a number of refugee families from Iran during his time as Parish Priest there. Those families told horrific stories of persecution and later, life in refugee camps.

"As a parent, I cannot even begin to imagine how difficult it must be for the children and families on Nauru.

"It is essential for Members of Parliament to support Government MPs who are calling for the removal of children and families from Nauru, and I strongly encourage all people of goodwill on the North Coast to lobby their Federal Members."

Dr Harvey was installed as Bishop of Grafton of September 29. He holds a doctorate in Health Science from the School of Psychology, Deakin University, Melbourne, and worked for several years as a psychologist in clinical settings.