

Concerned Catholics Tasmania Inc.

2 August 2023

Senator Anne Urquhart
PO Box 360
Devonport
Tasmania 7310
senator.urquhart@aph.gov.au

Dear Anne

Asylum Seekers and Refugees

Concerned Catholics Tasmania (CCT) commends the Albanese Government on the progress it has made since winning Government in May 2022 in bringing offshore detention to an end. With over 330 Tasmanians on our mailing list and other who visit our website, there are many of us who are committed to human dignity, justice, solidarity and the common good.

In particular, we congratulate the Albanese Government's work in giving permanent settlement to refugees and asylum seekers on temporary protection visas (TPVs) and initiating a way forward for family reunion. Those measures have allowed Australia to become a kinder and fairer nation.

Nevertheless, it is very concerning that 80 refugees are still suffering in Papua New Guinea 10 years after the two governments signed their offshore processing agreement. We urge the Albanese Government to work with the PNG Government to find permanent safety for asylum seekers and refugees still in PNG. We understand that many asylum seekers and refugees in PNG have complex health needs including acute mental health needs. It is a matter of deep concern and regret for us that the UNHCR has identified some refugees as being eligible for resettlement but too unwell to engage in that process. We believe that Australia, having created the off-shore detention process, needs to resolve these challenges.

Of the 3,127 people detained on Nauru and Manus Island since 19 July 2013, more than 1,100 remain in limbo in Australia and 80 in PNG. The callous treatment of these detainees, some for a decade or more, must come to an end soon. Their detention no longer serves any useful purpose and is a blight impacting on us and our fellow Australians who are labelled as unfair and unkind. This is especially so when there is no real prospect of all of those people ever being able to be resettled elsewhere.

Nor should our fellow human beings be returned to their countries of origin without first having been provided with appropriate advice as to their real alternatives.

Please advise us what the Albanese Government's intentions are regarding the more than 1,100 remaining in limbo in Australia and 80 in PNG, and when those who are unable to be resettled elsewhere safely will be allowed to enjoy the freedoms we Australians enjoy.

We look forward to your reply.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'S Chen', written in a cursive style.

Susan Chen

Chair - Concerned Catholics Tasmania