

Statement from Australian faith leaders

We urge our political leaders to reconsider the needs and futures of people who are still on Temporary Protection Visas. It is time to offer people on TPVs permanent protection.

We raise this matter cautiously, mindful of how fraught discussion of such matters has been in previous Federal Elections.

But we must speak because compassion and care for others are universal values shared by all major faith traditions. As people of faith, we bring this perspective to our consideration of all things, including public policy around protecting refugees and people seeking asylum.

Hence, we advocated for and welcomed recent steps to release most Medevac refugees from hotel detention; to move forward with the New Zealand resettlement plan; and to increase the number of Afghan refugees being offered protection.

We speak now, relatedly, out of deep concern about the current division between the two major parties on the issue of temporary protection visas.

These TPVs serve no public policy purpose and have lost community support since their introduction two decades ago.

Our pastoral knowledge is of people who have been living with stressful insecurity on TPVs in communities around Australia. We hear their prayers and know their fears. Having sought refuge, they just want to belong and contribute. With their families and friends, they are part of community groups and neighborhoods. Many have found jobs, work hard, pay their taxes, and have embraced Australia as their home.

COVID-19 has required many rethinks and reminded us all of what is truly important in life. There is a wonderful opportunity for our political leaders to now embrace a group of people who want to put down roots, build lives and work hard for Australia's best future. Like generations of migrants and refugees before them, this group will become an integral part of the Australian story.

It is as a voice for the relatively voiceless that we are moved to write to Prime Minister Scott Morrison and Opposition Leader Anthony Albanese in support of a more unifying and compassionate national policy on this important matter.

Signed by:

Sister Brigid Arthur, The Brigidine Asylum Seekers Project

Bishop Paul Barker, Anglican Diocese of Melbourne

Dr Greg Barton, Deakin University

Dr Makarand Bhagwat, President Hindu Council

Dr Graeme Blackman, President, Victorian Council of Churches

Rabbi Gabi Kaltman, ARK Centre

Tamara Domicelj, Country Director Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS) Australia, co-Chair of the Catholic Alliance for People Seeking Asylum

Bishop Genieve Blackwell, Anglican Diocese of Melbourne

Revd Sandy Boyce, Executive Officer, Victorian Council of Churches

Fr. Frank Brennan SJ, Rector Newman College

Rev Keiron Jones, Anglican Parish of Flinders and Balnarring

The Hon. Diana Bryant, AO, QC

Revd David Bullock, Director of Mission and Ministries, Baptist Union of Victoria

Professor Des Cahill, Religions for Peace Australia

Bishop Greg O'Kelly SJ, Bishop emeritus Diocese of Port Pirie

Dr. Leslie Cannold, author and ethicist

The Most Reverend Geoff Smith, Archbishop of Adelaide and Primate of the Anglican Church of Australia

Mr Tim Cartwright, APM and Advisory Board of the Australian Intercultural Society

Revd Debra Saffrey-Collins, Head of Chaplaincy and Diocesan Partnerships, Brotherhood of St. Laurence

Fr Peter Hosking SJ, Saint Ignatius' College Adelaide

Revd Tim Costello, Executive Director of Micah Australia

Dr Diana Cousens, Vice Chair, Buddhist Council of Victoria

Most Reverend Vincent Long Van Nguyen, Bishop of Parramatta and Chair of Catholic Bishops Commission for Social Justice, Mission and Service

Archbishop Mark Coleridge, Archbishop of the Archdiocese of Brisbane

Bhakta Dasa, International Society for Krishna Consciousness

Fr Christopher Horvat SJ, Superior of Adelaide Jesuits

Imam Alaa Elzokm, Imam of Heidelberg Mosque

Adel Salman, President Islamic Council of Victoria

Michael Kelly SJ

Celia Andrews, Anglican, Perth

Julie Edwards, Chief Executive Officer Jesuit Social Services, co-Chair of the Catholic Alliance for People Seeking Asylum

Dr Adrian Evans, Emeritus Professor of Law, Monash University

Paul Fyfe SJ, Parish Priest Canice's Kitchen and St Canice Catholic Parish, Sydney

Ms. Wendy Francis, on behalf of Australian Christian Lobby

Rabbi Ralph Genende

Revd Scott Holmes, Chaplain at the Brotherhood of St Laurence

Bishop Philip Huggins, Australian Centre for Christianity and Culture

Mark Raper, SJ, Myanmar Jesuit Region

Mr. Ahmet Keskin, Executive Director of the Australian Intercultural Society

The Very Revd Dr Andreas Loewe, Dean of Melbourne

Dr. Mohamed Mohideen, Islamic Council of Victoria

Bishop Kate Prowd, Anglican Diocese of Melbourne

Fr Nguyen Viet Huy SJ, Holy family Emerton Jesuit Community

Dr Susan Riley, Former Deputy Lord Mayor, City of Melbourne

Revd Helen Summers, Director, The Interfaith Centre of Melbourne

Jasbir Singh Suropada, Chairperson, Sikh Interfaith Council of Victoria

Barney Zwartz, Senior Fellow of the Centre for Public Christianity

Harold Zwier, Jewish community

Brenton Jayatilaka, Anglican Parish of City on a Hill

Revd Gemma Baseley, Anglican Diocese of Perth, Social Responsibility Committee

Br Peter Carroll FMS, President Catholic Religious Australia

Brendan Byrne, SJ, Professor Emeritus of new Testament, University of Divinity

Shaykh Mohammad Ramzan, President Victorian Islamic Commission of Research, Fatwa and Charity

Rev. Charles Balnaves, PP