

Statement from Pax Christi Australia

Pax Christi Australia is a branch of the International Ecumenical Peace movement, Pax Christi International. Pax Christi is heartened and encouraged by the actions of some churches in this country in their response to the recent High Court 6-1 decision to support the deportation of people back to Nauru. These churches have decided to offer sanctuary to refugees facing deportation to renewed violence and violations of their human rights. Pax Christi Australia is calling on more churches, parishes and cathedrals to stand together in reviving an ancient Christian tradition in providing sanctuary inside a church where people fleeing unjust civil authorities can reside. We acknowledge that it is not recognised in common law now, but the action of the churches is a challenge to a policy that has been and continues to harm innocent people who have not committed a crime.

This solidarity is not about politics but very much related to humanity and morality. Many commentators outside the church have stated that though the High Court has decreed the legality of Government legislation this does not mean it is moral or humane. We have recently condemned legal actions in Saudi Arabia in the knowledge that legality does not equal morality or humanity.

Pax Christi Australia is calling on the wider church in Australia to join together in this movement. This is a time to show courage and leadership where many people despair at the inhumanity that is perpetrated against innocent people. This leadership will also offer people who think that all laws must be followed irrespective of the harm they do that there is another way... the way of the gospel and Christ's example.

To remain inactive and silent in the face of injustice, to not stand in solidarity with those who have the courage to resist injustice would leave a great stain on our humanity as well as violating the humanity of people who are victims of all kinds of abuse under these laws.

Along with the churches who have offered sanctuary, Pax Christi Australia cannot ignore the consequences of the High Court ruling which many recognise will inflict further trauma on already traumatised people. People have suffered and been traumatised. We will not say yes to further trauma being caused.

Fr Claude Mostowik msc
President
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