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MEDIA RELEASE

Our call for end to undignified and cruel conditions in detention centres in Australia

Catholic Social Services Victoria has called on Mr Peter Dutton, Minister for Immigration and Border Protection, to ensure that detention centres safeguard the dignity, wellbeing and personal security of the individual people at these facilities.

Member agencies of Catholic Social Services Victoria have frequently reported on the cruel behaviour and procedures that have developed since Australian Border Force took over supervision of Australian detention centres in 2015.¹

In one case, a 26 year old woman was taken in handcuffs from the Maribyrnong Detention Centre to a major Melbourne hospital, suffering a severe renal infection. During the three days she was treated at the hospital, she was handcuffed to the bed the whole time except when going to the toilet, despite there being two guards in her room the whole time.

“People seeking asylum in Australia have a right to fair and supportive treatment if they are detained pending resolution of their claims”, says Denis Fitzgerald, Executive Director, Catholic Social Services Victoria. Mr Fitzgerald says that the Australian community, including the Catholic community, expect no less of the Australian Government.

If there is a need to temporarily detain people seeking asylum, they should be accommodated in non-correctional settings designed to ensure their comfort, wellbeing and personal security. Detention should not be used as a punishment and people seeking asylum should not be treated as criminals.

Catholic Social Services welcomes the Government’s pending ratification of the *Optional Protocol to the Convention Against Torture*, and calls for the *Protocol* to be fully applied and implemented in all immigration detention facilities, including those in Australia.

The Catholic Social Services Victoria letter to the Minister for Immigration and Border Protection is at www.css.org.au.

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¹ Organisations that have contributed to this statement, and who support it, include:

- Brigidine Asylum Seeker Support Program
- CatholicCare
- Edmund Rice Community and Refugee Services
- Jesuit Social Services
- Melbourne Catholic Migrant and Refugee Office
- Missionary Sisters of Service
- St Vincent de Paul Society, Victoria
- Missionary Sisters of Service