



Media Release

July 25, 2010

Bipartisan migration policies show lack of hindsight – Catholic Bishops

The Australian Catholic Bishops Conference (ACBC) together with the Australian Catholic Migrant and Refugee Office (ACMRO) today strongly question bipartisan policies on migration, calling them “without foresight or hindsight.”

The Coalition government today announced that if elected, they would cut overseas migration from 300,000 to 170,000. The planned cuts will focus on family and student visa programs, while skilled migration would largely be quarantined. Mr Abbott said the Coalition would keep skilled migration numbers up, but would crack down on “dubious educational and family-reunion applicants”.

Labor leader Julia Gillard similarly announced last week that she does not believe that a “Big Australia” with a population of approximately 36 million by 2050 is desirable either; a policy which is at odds with her predecessor Kevin Rudd who announced the “Big Australia” policy as asylum seekers arrived off our shores. Gillard maintains that already, however, the Labor government has started reducing migration, and is already on the way to arriving at 145,000 net migration.

Bishop Joseph Grech, Australian Catholic Bishops Conference delegate for Migrants and Refugees expressed distress at both parties’ ignorance of the rich contributions of migrants to Australian society in their respective policy statements and questioned why both sides of politics are bowing down to pressure at migrants’ expense.

“Both parties are arguing that higher levels of migration will put strains on the country’s infrastructure, however, it is the job of the Government to look to sustainable infrastructure, regardless of migration levels”, he said.

“Australia is a country which, compared to most nations that welcome migrants, is underpopulated, with a standard of life which would remain sustainable, despite higher levels of migration”, said Bishop Grech.

“In our 2008 document *“Graced by Migration”* we demonstrated that Australia needs migration. The various migration movements have offset the impact of Australia’s declining birth rate; they have contributed to the nation’s economic well-being and they have added to our reputation as a unified nation specially committed and equipped to the creation of cultural and religious diversity.”

The Australian Catholic Bishops Conference believe that by cutting down the migration program that there would be no economic gain for citizens of this country, rather we would lose the valuable contribution that migration brings.

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