



CONFERENCE OF LEADERS OF RELIGIOUS INSTITUTES IN NEW SOUTH WALES CLRI (NSW)

ABN: 52 476 362 010
Member of Catholic Church Religious Group

21st September, 2009.

Senator the Hon. Christopher Evans,
Minister for Immigration and Citizenship,
P.O. Box 1322
West Perth – WA – 6872

Dear Senator Evans,

I write on behalf of the Social Justice Group of the Conference of Leaders of Religious Institutes in NSW. CLRI represents about 3,500 religious in the State. Many of these Institutes have members and groups involved in refugee support. We welcomed the passing of the law which abolished the 45-day rule and the cancellation of detention debts. We would like to thank you for introducing these amendments which make our policies more humane.

Our current situation in Australia with regard to the job market is a very difficult one. This means that refugees and asylum seekers will have more difficulty in finding employment. Those on Bridging Visas will now have work rights but finding employment is still difficult. Often they lack English skills, employers require work experience, overseas qualifications take time to recognise in Australia, all of which add to their difficulty in the job market. The fact that Bridging Visas are not issued in a document comprising a photograph of the person means that some of those on Bridging Visas do not any photo identification, a further difficulty in the employment process.

Our Institutes are often approached by people in this situation. Given that they do not have Centrelink benefits, they are reduced to seeking charity in order to survive. We believe that this situation violates the dignity of the human person. While awaiting resolution of their status, we believe that those on Bridging Visas should also have Centrelink benefits when required.

We affirm, as we have done on previous occasions, that your efforts to make our immigration policy more humane are much appreciated. We make the above submission in order to bring this situation to your attention.

Yours sincerely,

Grace Ellul sm
For the Refugees Subgroup
of the Social Justice Committee

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