Dear Friends

**CALL FOR A JUBILEE - A TIME FOR NEW BEGINNINGS**

DRAFT

**amnesty for people seeking refuge**

In May this year, the National Council of Churches, the Australian Churches Refugee Taskforce and

various Jewish, Muslim and Christian faiths issued a statement calling on the Federal Parliament to

provide a “Jubilee” or amnesty for the people seeking refuge who have been subject to Australia’s

offshore processing policies for the past six years. See the statement below, or on the National Council of Churches website.

This is an invitation to individuals, and also faith-based communities/ school groups etc to call for a Jubilee, a new beginning for refugees and people seeking asylum in Australia. See below a sample letter which you can use as is, or as a basis for your own version of the letter.

We suggest your letter be sent to the Prime Minister, the Opposition Leader and your local Member of Parliament. If you prefer you could email:

The Hon Scott Morrison MP

Prime Minister

Parliament House

Canberra ACT 2600

<https://www.pm.gov.au/contact-your-pm> (online contact form)

The Hon Anthony Albanese MP

Leader of the Opposition

Parliament House

Canberra ACT 2600

a.albanese.mp@aph.gov.au

Also send to your local MP – or deliver in person! To find your local MP and electoral office details go to: <https://www.aph.gov.au/Senators_and_Members/Members>

Mr/Ms (full name) MP

Member for (electorate)

Address

Lastly, it would be great if you can let us know when you have sent your letters – just email: austrefugeenetwork@gmail.com with Jubilee letter in the subject line, and the details of your group or your post code if sending as an individual.

We suggest that you take this action by 10 September as the issues for refugees and people seeking asylum are critical.

ARAN Committee

*Thanks to members of the Combined Refugee Action Group in Geelong for suggesting this letter-writing campaign.*

**MEDIA RELEASE**

# MAY 2019

(sent immediately after the Federal Election)

Marking this time of new beginning, we urge the newly elected Federal Government and Prime Minister Scott Morrison to resolve the plight of the 1000+ refugees in Manus and Nauru, some of whom are now in Australia.

Let them settle here.

It is a new day in our Australian democracy; a time for new beginnings. It would be so wonderful if this painful matter from the past was concluded now.

In some of our Scriptures there is the record of a Jubilee moment when people help others make a new beginning, offering consolation to those long trapped in bleak circumstances.

The source of this kindness is the recognition that all we have comes from God as gift or Rahamim or Chesed, in our various traditions.

In the Jubilee, those who need special consideration are given the grace of a new beginning.

The start of a new Parliament is like a Jubilee moment, fresh with potential for doing good.

The facts are well known. Unless there is some initiative by the new Government, given previous policy, the refugees remaining in Manus and Nauru will face many more years stuck as they are today, drained of hope.

This is painful beyond words.

But new beginnings offer the promise that things will get better.

An ennobling act by our newly elected Prime Minister would lift people's spirits, giving hope that better days lie ahead.

**Bishop Philip Huggins** (President of National Council of Churches in Australia)

**Elizabeth Stone** (National Council of Churches in Australia)

**Ahmet Keskin** (Australian Intercultural Society)

**Imam Dr Bekim Hasani**

**Rev Ian Smith** (Victorian Council of Churches)

**Rabbi Fred Morgan AM**

**Emeritus Professor Joseph A. Camilleri OAM** (Pax Christi)

**Sr Libby Rogerson IBVM** (Loreto Sister)

**Imam Alaa Elzokm**

**Imam Riad Galil OAM**

**Sheik Abu Omar**

**Rabbi Shamir Caplan**

**Rob Floyd** (Chair of Australian Churches Refugee Taskforce)

**Cantor Michel Laloum Rabbi Kim Ettlinger**

For media contact:

**Elizabeth Stone** Tel 0437 402 884

**Harold Zwier** Tel. 0416 236 690

**PROFORMA LETTER**

***LETTERHEAD - [If group eg. Parish/Diocese/School/Group letterhead, including address]***

***Individuals leave this blank***

**[Date]**

Dear [Prime Minister Scott Morrison/Opposition Leader Anthony Albanese/Your local MP],

**Calling for a Jubilee – a new beginning for refugees and people seeking asylum**

We write in solidarity with the National Council of Churches, Australian Catholic Bishops and Catholic Religious Australia, the Australian Churches Refugee Taskforce and other Jewish, Muslim and Christian faith leaders who have issued recent statements asking for an act of clemency and a humanitarian solution. These statements called on the Federal Government to resolve the plight of the people held on Nauru and in PNG, or in Australia for medical reasons.

On behalf of the **[church congregation/school community/diocese/parish]**, I/we **[name/position]** support(s) this call for a ‘Jubilee’ for refugees; a Biblical principle whereby people who have long been trapped in bleak circumstances are given a special dispensation for a new beginning.

Evidence abounds that indefinite detention and ongoing uncertainty destroys people’s mental and physical health. Many of the people remaining in PNG and Nauru have been held there since July 2013. There is a loss of hope ‑ of ever being able to rebuild their lives and being reunited with their families. Many have partners and children who are living in unsafe situations, which compounds their anguish. This despair has led to an increase in acts of self-harm, as people have lost the strength to go on. Some people been brought here for medical treatment but continue to be held indefinitely in onshore immigration detention facilities or other places of detention. They are also unable to move on with their lives, and they live with the constant fear of being returned to Manus Island, Nauru or back to persecution in their countries of origin.

We affirm our commitment to seeing a fair system for all people seeking asylum in Australia, which includes community-based processing, fair processes of appeal, access to a universal safety net and permanent protection. We ask that this Jubilee be the beginning of a renewed approach underpinned by compassion and welcome.

On matters regarding refugees, we take guidance from the following Scriptures:

“When a foreigner resides among you in your land, do not mistreat them. The foreigner residing among you must be treated as your native-born. Love them as yourself, for you were foreigners in Egypt.”

(Leviticus 19: 33 – 34)

“The Spirit of the Lord is on me because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives….”

(Luke 4: 18 – 19)

People who exercised their legal right to seek safety in Australia from life-threatening persecution but were instead sent to Manus Island and Nauru to languish in limbo. They have been mistreated by Australia.

We urgently call on all Members of Parliament and Senators to take a non-partisan approach to end the humanitarian crisis which has been created by indefinite offshore detention. We urge Members and Senators to immediately provide a Jubilee and resettle, in Australia, New Zealand or to a safe, comparable country, all of the people who have been subject to the cruelty and injustice of “offshore processing”.

Yours faithfully,

**[Name]**

**[Position]**

**[Parish/Diocese/Organisation/Group/School]**