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## **Easter hope in a time of exclusion: CAPSA renews its call for compassionate asylum policy**

As Christians across the world prepare to celebrate Easter, the Catholic Alliance for People Seeking Asylum (CAPSA) is calling on Australians to reflect deeply on the meaning of the season - and with a Federal Election less than three weeks away, for all political leaders to commit to a more compassionate and just response to people seeking protection in our country.

For many years, Palm Sunday has been a day for pleading the cause of refugees in Australia and around the world. It is a day rooted in the memory of an outcast entering the capital, only to be rejected, tortured, and killed outside its walls. This powerful image invites us to remember the millions today who have been driven from their homes by war, persecution, and the escalating impacts of climate change.

From the devastation in Gaza, to the forgotten suffering in Myanmar, to the harsh treatment of asylum seekers across borders including in our own backyard this Easter, CAPSA invites Australians to open their eyes and hearts.

“We must not turn away from the stories of families fleeing unimaginable hardship. Easter is a reminder that even in the face of rejection and death, hope and life can rise again. Our response to people seeking asylum must be one of welcome, not punishment,” says Julie Edwards, CEO of Jesuit Social Services and Chair of CAPSA.

The marches, vigils and testimonies that were held around Australia on Palm Sunday are acts of hope and solidarity to resist despair and call each of us to action - by advocating for fair policies, supporting refugee families, or simply listening to the stories of those who have been forced to flee.

Bishop Vincent Long, Bishop of Parramatta, says “in Jesus’ journey to the cross, we see the suffering of the displaced, the excluded and the unwanted. But in the resurrection, we see God’s affirmation of human dignity. As followers of Christ, we are called not only to accompany the vulnerable in their suffering, but to stand with them in hope. In a world so often closed off by fear, Easter calls us to open our hearts and borders to love.”

CAPSA continues to urge all politicians to support the following commitments:

- End the uncertainty for people seeking asylum
- Ensure access to work, study and essential public services
- End to offshore detention processing
- Increase in Australia’s humanitarian intake and expansion of community support

“This Easter, let us remember that the stone was rolled away. Despair is not the end of the story. Love and hospitality still have the power to triumph,” says Ms Edwards.

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