



## MEDIA RELEASE

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### **St Vincent de Paul Society calls for urgent action to avert further injury and loss of life on Manus Island**

On the eve of the scheduled closure of the Manus Regional Processing Centre, the St Vincent de Paul Society has called on the Australian Government to act urgently to avoid further critical incidents and loss of life, and to expedite refugee resettlement to safe third countries.

“Based on first-hand accounts from our own members on Manus Island, we believe the situation has reached a critical point and poses grave risks to the safety of the men held there,” said Dr John Falzon, CEO of the St Vincent de Paul Society National Council.

“We believe further critical incidents or loss of life are inevitable unless threats to forcibly move the men are withdrawn and essential services and security are maintained.”

Members of the Society have visited Manus Island in recent months and witnessed the deterioration in conditions, the progressive withdrawal of Australian Government-funded support and services, and growing confusion and chaos. Many of the men have complex mental and physical health problems that have worsened as tensions have escalated and essential services have ceased.

“It is time to bring these men to Australia, before there are any more deaths. It was Australia’s responsibility in the first instance to offer these men refuge: a responsibility that we have shirked. As a result, great damage has been done,” said Dr Falzon.

The withdrawal of health and mental health services is a matter of particular concern both to the Society and to [the Government of Papua New Guinea](#). While many in the local Manus community are sympathetic toward the refugees, the men fear certain elements from whom they have little local protection.

“The political landscape is changing. People in Australia realise that offshore detention is simply too expensive in terms of both money and human suffering. Australians want to believe themselves a generous and fair minded people. The detention centres are like open sores on our collective consciences,” Dr Falzon said.

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