



#### **Budget's Most Important Deficit – Support for the Most Vulnerable and First Peoples**

The Uniting Church in Australia has expressed overall disappointment at the 2015-16 Federal Budget, singling out measures that will add to the suffering of the most vulnerable in Australia and abroad.

“Another one billion dollars of cuts in foreign aid in the next financial year will hit the world’s poor hardest of all,” said Uniting Church President Rev. Professor Andrew Dutney.

“This miserable measure compounds previous cuts to Australia’s aid program and is the antithesis of the compassion shown by the Australian public who have responded with such generosity to disasters in Vanuatu and Nepal.”

The National Director of UnitingWorld Rob Floyd says he will seek further information from the Federal Government in the days ahead to see if and how ongoing programs will be affected.

“UnitingWorld’s programs in the Pacific, Asia and Africa bring relief and hope to some of the poorest of the poor,” said Mr Floyd.

“It is vital that these programs continue to be delivered. This savage cut undermines both our reputation in the world and our efforts to promote peace.”

Spending on Australia’s First Peoples social security, welfare and health has also stalled with expenses dropping or standing still on the back of last year’s \$500 million cutback.

Income management programs will also be extended in all locations for another two years.

At the same time the Federal Government is establishing a \$5 billion Northern Australia Infrastructure Facility to support major projects across northern Australia.

“Infrastructure funding is welcome, but it must not be at the expense of human infrastructure, particularly in northern Australia,” said Rev. Prof. Dutney.

“First Peoples must be equal partners in these enterprises and their rights and sovereignty respected. I expect the role of Indigenous Australians to be duly acknowledged in this process.

“Without genuine listening and inclusion there can be no true reconciliation between First and Second Peoples,” said Rev. Prof. Dutney.

On 29 May this year it will be 30 years since the Uniting Church established its Uniting Aboriginal and Islander Christian Congress, an autonomous self-governing part of the Uniting Church in Australia.

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