



## Uniting Church in Australia Assembly

### Media Release

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#### In support of a national summit on refugee policy

The President of the Uniting Church in Australia Stuart McMillan has added his voice to the growing number of advocates calling for a national summit on alternatives to Australia's refugee policies.

"The Federal Government should hold a summit to explore alternatives to the current policies which include the mandatory detention and offshore processing of people seeking asylum," said Mr McMillan.

"The recent accounts of abuse and mistreatment on Nauru are just the latest in a mountain of evidence of cruelty and abuse.

"People are not safe there and the only way to ensure their safety is to bring them to Australia. We must offer them the best available care while their claims for protection are processed."

Faith leaders, academics and community groups across Australia have also called for an emergency summit to discuss alternative refugee policies.

The National Director of UnitingJustice Australia Rev. Elenie Poulos said that the current policies breach our duty of care to people in need and are unsustainable.

"With the closure of the centre on Manus Island and continuing revelations of the suffering of people on Nauru, the responsible course of action is for the Government to bring refugees and people seeking asylum here.

"Then we must work on adopting a more just and humane approach. There has never been just one way to end dangerous sea journeys and the solution does not have to be cruel," said Rev. Poulos.

"A Federal Government sponsored summit would be an important demonstration for Australians and for the international community that we are willing to offer leadership on this issue."

The Uniting Church has repeatedly called on the Australian Government to take a lead in the development of a regional approach to the protection of refugees. The Church's refugee policy *Shelter from the Storm* recommends the following measures:

- focusing on a long-term, effective and genuinely shared regional solution that is negotiated multilaterally, and in consultation with UNHCR and with civil society;
- ensuring that people are safe where they are, have hope for a secure future for themselves and their families and, if necessary, are able to access appropriate resettlement within the region;
- the fair, quick and transparent processing of protection claims by UNHCR supported by Australia;
- ending the forced turn-back of boats carrying people seeking asylum; and
- demonstrating Australia's commitment to a regional solution by resettling a substantial number of refugees from the region.

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