



# **MEDIA RELEASE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY UNITING CHURCH**

**Immediate Release**

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**To: Newsdesk**

**From: Kim Cain, Media Liaison 0419 373 123**

## **NEW UNITING CHURCH POLICY ON REFUGEES: 'End the discrimination and fear'**

The Church today released a new policy on Asylum Seekers and Refugees, raising concerns about the inflammatory and discriminatory language used against them by the Government.

It also calls for a new special bridging visa for asylum seekers who cannot return to their place of origin, as that 'nation' is not recognised by the Australian government.

The policy document adopted by the Uniting Church comes two days after the church's President, Rev Professor James Haire, called for "some soul" to be injected into the upcoming Federal election.

The policy highlights a series of issues including:

- inflammatory and discriminatory language used by Government against refugees and asylum seekers;
- calls for families to be released quickly once health and safety checks are completed;
- notes clear discrimination against various groups of asylum seekers;
- calls for the reinstatement of community support programs for people on temporary protection visas;
- concern about a basic lack of cultural sensitivity shown towards asylum seekers who often arrive traumatised and fearful.

The policy says, "Asylum seekers who enter Australia are ...particularly traumatised. They are often suffering psychosocial health problems. The way Australia deals with these asylum seekers does not tend to alleviate their trauma."

The policy calls for a new visa arrangement specifically for asylum seekers from countries, which Australia does not recognise: "The matter of stateless people is one of growing concern.

"These are people who have been refused entry into Australia, or who have requested deportation but no country is prepared to accept them. There is a need for a new category of bridging visa with full allowances for those assessed as posing no danger to the community," the policy states.

The Uniting Church policy also says "The Australian response should be culturally sensitive towards asylum seekers and the situations from which they come.

"On arrival asylum seekers should have access to the protections afforded (by) international law.

"We must use more sensitive language when we ... discuss refugees and asylum seekers. Government policies ... must not use language which encourages fear and hatred."

James Haire and Rosemary Miller (social justice spokesperson) available for interview

Contact: Kim Cain, Media Liaison 0419 373 123