



MEDIA RELEASE

To: News Editor
From: Uniting Church in Western Australia
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Call for compassion in disability justice concerns

When considering the care of people with disabilities in our justice system, the Moderator of the Uniting Church in Western Australia, Rev Ron Larkin calls on the community to exercise compassion.

“The Uniting Church ‘believes that every person is precious and entitled to live with dignity’¹. The development of two Disability Justice Centres in the metropolitan area is an opportunity to uphold the human rights of vulnerable people in our community,” said Rev Larkin.

The Uniting Church in Western Australia believes we should be investing in the building of communities, not prisons, and that centres such as the proposed Disability Justice Centre address the systematic failure of our current justice system in its approach to people with intellectual or cognitive disability.

Rosemary Hudson Miller, Association General Secretary, Justice and Mission believes the Disability Justice Centre approach offers an alternative that gives hope to vulnerable people, and an opportunity for some to eventually move away from the prison justice system.

“It is important to note that the people being considered for these centres have never been convicted with an offence as their disability is such that they are deemed unfit to plead. The Mentally Impaired Accused Review Board will determine who is suitable to live in the centres.

“The plan for the centres is to offer a secure environment for its residents and staff, and by locating the centre in the residential community it provides an opportunity for the development of life skills, and supervised interaction with other essential services.

“The hope is that the residents will eventually be equipped to return to community life over time. Locating such a facility next to a prison is clearly inappropriate for this type of centre, as it is not intended to operate like a prison.

“Although it is unfortunate that the consultation process with the local community in Lockridge and Kiara appears to be lacking, there is an important opportunity here for community education on the issues surrounding people with intellectual or cognitive disability and the current lack in our justice system for these vulnerable people,” said Ms Hudson Miller.

Uniting Church Moderator, Rev Ron Larkin and Associate General Secretary, Justice and Mission are available for comment. Please contact Media and Communications Manager, Maggie Johns on 0419 831 576.

¹ UnitingJustice Australia – Dignity in Humanity: A Uniting Church Statement on Human Rights.
<http://www.unitingjustice.org.au/human-rights/uca-statements/item/484-dignity-in-humanity-a-uniting-church-statement-on-human-rights>