



MEDIA RELEASE

To: News Editor
From: Uniting Church Synod of WA,
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World Refugee Day – Uniting Church calls for new solutions

On World Refugee Day, the Uniting Church in Australia, Synod of Western Australia believes the time to look for a new approach to asylum seekers is well overdue.

The Moderator, Rev Ron Larkin said, “With our harsh mandatory detention policies, and the staggering number of 1983 children in immigration detention, as of 1 March 2013, we are at risk of causing serious, long-term harm to already vulnerable people who are simply seeking our protection as is their right under international law.

“It is time to recognise that our deterrence regime is not working. It is time to take a new look at our approach to asylum seekers, to seek to prevent further tragedy at sea, and to prevent long-term harm to people in our detention centres as a result of our failing deterrence policies.

“We believe that Australia needs to work with the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) to provide greater resources to process asylum seekers in Indonesia. If there is a safe and trustworthy application process with enough places offered by Australia for people found to be in need of protection, then we can avoid people risking their lives on boats.”

In recognition of Australia’s relatively low asylum seeker intake, the people of the Uniting Church in Western Australia at their annual meeting in September last year called upon the government to increase the intake of asylum seekers to 60,000.

The Uniting Church in Australia is a long-standing advocate of the just treatment of asylum seekers.

Ends

The leader of the Uniting Church in Western Australia, the Moderator, Rev Ron Larkin, is available for interviews. Please contact Maggie Johns on 0419 831 576.