



Uniting Church in Australia Assembly

MEDIA RELEASE

One Small Step Forward on Children in Detention

The Uniting Church in Australia has welcomed an announcement by the Minister for Immigration and Border Protection that some children in detention will be released into the community, and asked for reassurances on the conditions of their care.

“We hope that the increased support and protection announced today will be sufficient and ongoing,” said Uniting Church President Rev. Prof. Andrew Dutney.

“The Uniting Church has long been calling for the release of all children and their families and all unaccompanied children from all immigration detention centres.

“While today’s news is another step in the process, there is much still to be done,” said Rev. Prof. Dutney.

UnitingJustice Australia has requested more information from the Minister’s Office about the conditions of the new bridging visas being issued to the children and their families.

“Many asylum seeker families currently on bridging visas are destitute and relying on the generosity of individuals and organisations in the community,” said Rev. Elenie Poulos, the National Director of UnitingJustice Australia.

“There is a large backlog in the processing of protection claims and so people end up on bridging visas for a very long time.

“Today’s announcement relates to children and their families who arrived before 19 July 2013.

“This group of asylum seekers was always going to be released. What about those children who are suffering on Nauru and Christmas Island? And what about children over the age of 10?”

The Minister’s statement makes it clear that there is no change of Government policy for the remaining children, who Rev. Poulos says continue to be punished in order to send a message to people smugglers.

“A truly compassionate response would see all children and their families in Nauru and on Christmas Island brought back to the mainland immediately.”

“No child belongs in detention. Ever,” said Rev. Poulos.

19 August 2014