



WELCOME THE STRANGER

NINTH ASSEMBLY, UNITING CHURCH IN AUSTRALIA

RESOLUTION 00.21.03



In the spirit of the Year of Jubilee

00.21.03 *The Assembly resolved:*

- a) to note the important call of the gospel to welcome the stranger;
- b) to commend and celebrate the work of those within the Uniting Church and wider community who work with refugees and asylum seekers as they commence resettlement within Australia;
- c) to celebrate the work which has been undertaken by the NCCA National Program for Refugees and Displaced Persons over many years and for the creation in late 1998 of an ecumenical committee to support this work;
- d) to commit the Uniting Church in Australia to ongoing support for refugee and asylum seeker resettlement in Australia;
- e) to commit the Uniting Church in Australia to:
 - (i) promoting cultural sensitivity particularly in the language that it uses to describe those who are refugees, access to interpreters from the same cultural background and access to appropriate faith communities; and
 - (ii) awareness of racism and discrimination used to instil fear against refugees and asylum seekers;
- f) to affirm the need for fair, humanitarian, adequately resourced and culturally appropriate government policies and procedures for the processing of refugees and asylum seekers both within Australia and overseas;
- g) to call on the Australian government to amend its policies and practices by ensuring:
 - (i) accountability and transparency within government process in processing of refugees and asylum seekers;
 - (ii) that discrimination does not occur in the treatment of refugees and asylum seekers, and that their dignity is respected;
 - (iii) cultural sensitivity towards asylum seekers and the situations from which they come;
 - (iv) that the language used by Government does not encourage fear and hatred towards refugees and asylum seekers;
 - (v) the current limits on intake of refugees and asylum seekers within Australia are reviewed and that Government demonstrate its international responsibility to the protection of vulnerable individuals;
 - (vi) an end to the long period of detention experienced by some refugees and asylum seekers;



- (vii) continued investigation and implementation of alternative methods to detention for those seeking asylum onshore in Australia;
 - (viii) all refugees and asylum seekers have equal access to facilities, benefits, assistance, information, community networks and legal advice immediately upon arrival within Australia;
 - (ix) immediate notification to the Red Cross and United Nations of any refugees or asylum seekers arrival in Australia;
 - (x) sufficient and culturally sensitive translation services are available in all refugee centres;
 - (xi) sufficient access to medical, legal or community services for those residing in detention centres, including trauma and torture services;
- h) to encourage the Australian government to separate its trade policy from its response to refugees and asylum seekers;
- i) to encourage members, agencies, Congregations and councils of the Uniting Church to welcome recently arrived refugees into their communities and to provide support and advocacy as they are able;
- j) to express its concern to the Australian government at the current practice of releasing refugees into urban and rural areas with inappropriate supports and resources, and with unsatisfactory notification of services within the placement area.