

**Media Release:** Australian Christian Churches stand in unity for compassion, justice and dignity for refugees in Manus Island, PNG.

**November 24 2017:** The National Council of Churches in Australia, Act for Peace and the Australian Churches Refugee Taskforce stand together to bear witness to the suffering that Australia's bipartisan refugee policy in regard to offshore processing, has caused.

We mourn the loss of justice for those refugees in PNG who are willing to put their own bodies in danger as the last cry of despair in the search for a safe future.

We pray for Australian Government leadership who may not have envisaged such suffering in re-enacting offshore processing, but who now cannot shy from the reality of the damage that has been done.

We stand with the Manus Island and PNG people who are facing the presumption that they are not a safe and hospitable nation and cannot be trusted to host these vulnerable men.

We plead that if the men are to remain in PNG for now, that force is not used to relocate them and that the Australian Government contributes to securing their dignity and safety.

We request that the Australian Government ensure the processing of re-settlement for these men occurs safely, swiftly and with the greatest regard to family unity.

**National Council of Churches in Australia President Bishop Phillip Huggins:**

*It is difficult to understand how a nation like Australia has found itself in this situation. Other countries face far greater challenges with hosting refugees and struggling with unexpected arrivals. Australia's current situation has put enormous, unnecessary ethical pressure on all involved and needs to be resolved peacefully and swiftly".*

**Australian Churches Refugee Taskforce Chair, the Very Rev'd Dr. Peter Catt:**

*"We know that PNG has issues of concern for its own population and its nation. For the context on Manus Island we recognise this is not the fault of the refugees, the PNG locals or their Government. Australia wanted a quick fix to a situation which has turned into a protracted and harmful experience for many."*

**Act for Peace Executive Director Ms. Janet Cousens**

*"There are many lessons to learn from this situation that show us that even with the intention to save lives at sea or reduce human trafficking, that damage and suffering has still been caused to many people."*

**Media inquiries may be directed to:**

Bishop Phillip Huggins  
President  
National Council of Churches in Australia  
0418799515

The Very Rev'd Dr. Peter Catt  
Chair  
Australian Churches Refugee Taskforce  
0404052494

Caz Coleman  
Executive Officer  
Australian Churches Refugee Taskforce  
0411876226