



AUSTRALIAN CHURCHES
REFUGEE TASKFORCE



National Council of
Churches in Australia

MEDIA RELEASE

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Addressing Misinformation as Churches Call for the Medevac Legislation to Remain

Australian Church leaders have called on the Senate to keep the current Medevac Legislation in place.

A briefing paper released today by the Australian Churches Refugee Taskforce and the National Council of Churches in Australia aims to address the misinformation and confusion being peddled by sections of the media and politicians about the Australian Government's official processes for refugees and people seeking asylum in Australia and those in offshore detention.

The Churches' paper puts the Medevac legislation in the context of a timeline of complex and confusing Government policy changes since 2012. "The Government policy changes and long-term detention of refugees and people seeking asylum has caused the very critical and unmet medical and health needs that the Medevac legislation is addressing" says Rob Floyd, Chair of the Australian Churches Refugee Taskforce and Associate General Secretary of the Uniting Church in Australia's National Assembly.

"We welcome the fact that the medical evacuation program is saving lives and reducing misery and we thank the members of Parliament who continue to support this important humanitarian initiative of the last Parliament. Refugees and people seeking asylum have a human face" Mr Floyd says.

"The medical transfer program has saved lives" comments Bishop Philip Huggins, President of the National Council of Churches in Australia. "Mental health is the most significant issue. All people who have been medically evacuated from Manus Island and Nauru experience depression and anxiety and most, the effects of traumatic stress. It is the nature of detention to traumatise people. People with mental health issues are often not well enough to have their other health and medical needs treated. Their mental health needs to be addressed first. This has repeatedly been stated by the Australian Medical Association."

"The media and political commentary on the medical transfers under the Medevac legislation is an example of how facts have deliberately gone missing and are being twisted in reporting" says Mr Floyd, on behalf of the Australian Churches Refugee Taskforce.

The briefing paper also looks at the situation and options for refugees stuck in limbo on Temporary Protection Visas and Safe Haven Enterprise visas, as well as those refused asylum under the government's processes. Many are being supported with food, clothing, accommodation, education and jobs by church congregations and church care agencies, together with other community groups across Australia.

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Download the [MEDEVAC Briefing Paper](#) from the ACRT website