

**Media Release:** Churches call for humane treatment.

**15<sup>th</sup> February 2019:** The Australian Churches' Refugee Taskforce and the National Council of Churches in Australia call for an end to the demonising of refugees and asylum seekers and a humane approach to their care and support.

As people of faith we welcome recent moves to bring all children in detention off Nauru. We welcome the passing of the Medical Transfer Bill by our Australian Parliament of elected representatives. Both these measures are humane and in no way jeopardise our national security. But they do not go far enough.

As people of faith we reject any rhetoric that suggests Australia is facing a border protection crisis and that Australia needs to reopen Christmas Island as a detention facility.

As people of faith we call on people from all sides of politics, the media and society to avoid using language that seeks to demonise groups of people currently held in detention and other people wanting to come to Australia to seek a safe life.

As people of faith we call on politicians from all political parties to outline reasoned and humane policies that will end offshore detention. We want to ensure the dignity and well-being of all in our care, including those people seeking safe refuge who are in Australia and being left destitute in our communities and neighbourhoods by current policy.

We urge the kind of welcome that lifted everyone's spirits this week, with the return of Hakeem from detention in Thailand, who we all are embracing as one of our own.

Let us be clear. We are helping sick people because they need our help. That is enough to do well, now.

"Our Churches and agencies around the nation, as ever, stand ready to help, in partnership with our Government."

FOR MEDIA COMMENT:

Bishop Philip Huggins

0418 799 515

Bishop Philip Huggins of the Anglican Church of Australia is the current President of National Council of Churches in Australia and a founding member of the Australian Churches' Refugee Taskforce.