

Media Release: AUSTRALIAN CHURCHES REFUGEE TASKFORCE AFFIRMS LIBERAL MP'S CALL TO FIND DURABLE SOLUTIONS FOR REFUGEES AND CLOSE NAURU AND MANUS.

August 17th 2017: The Australian Churches' Refugee Taskforce (ACRT) applauds backbench MP Russell Broadbent for speaking in parliament about the need to resolve the situation on Nauru and Manus. Quoting the author and journalist David Marr, Mr Broadbent pointed to Marr's comment that there could not be a better service to Christ than for Christians to fight for those Australia has imprisoned in Nauru and Manus.

The Australian Churches' Refugee Taskforce has worked collaboratively with other agencies across Australia for four years to call for the closure of offshore detention. The ACRT holds the position that neither Nauru nor Manus, is a durable solution in relation to the integration of refugees in either country.

Taskforce Chair, the Very Rev'd Dr Peter Catt:

"We believe that any durable solution for those on Nauru and Manus through the US deal is welcome. However, we firmly believe that Australia is the place people should have been processed and settled in the first instance."

The offshore processing arrangements when first proposed by the Expert Panel in 2012, were never designed for integration into Nauru or Manus. The aim was always for safe re-settlement and is clearly articulated in the report.

"Offshore processing has failed for the second time. Neither Nauru nor Manus has the capacity or cultural readiness for integration of the refugees who were sent there. People in both locations continue to live in fear with very few options for safety, dignity and economic sustainability. Durable solutions must be found in either the US, Australia or another safe location."

Mr Broadbent's words in parliament reflect the faithful stance of the ACRT in the call to turn towards the suffering of those on Nauru and Manus and to create safety and dignity. Australia has tried offshore processing twice now in two decades. Both attempts have failed to create durable solutions and avoid suffering and permanent harm to those seeking Australia's protection.

It is time to end attempts to abrogate Australia's responsibility to care for and process those seeking our protection. Working within the region to create sustainable solutions and focusing on community based care arrangements, is the only way to uphold the safety and dignity of each person requesting protection.

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