

MEDIA RELEASE



To: News Editor
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Uniting Church WA calls for no-one to be left behind in Refugee Week

During Refugee Week 2020, the Uniting Church Western Australia is calling on all levels of Government to do their part to make sure that refugees and people seeking asylum are not left behind amid the pressures of the COVID-19 crisis.

Rev Steve Francis, Moderator of the Uniting Church WA said, “It has been so encouraging to see the caring spirit of our communities and our politicians as they put aside traditional divides to make sure we all get through this COVID-19 crisis.

“However, there are some among us, like people seeking asylum, who are still falling through the cracks. We know that if people are left to hit rock bottom, multiple issues emerge that begin to ripple out. It’s not good for anyone to have people who are already in a very vulnerable position to be thrust into destitution, debt spirals or homelessness.”

The Refugee Council of Australia are using Refugee Week to highlight the approximately 16,000 children in families seeking protection in Australia. They are saying that many people seeking asylum have lost their jobs as a result of COVID-19, as they often work in the service sectors worst affected.

Since people seeking asylum are not eligible for the JobSeeker or JobKeeper payments many have been left with nothing.

In Western Australia, the Centre for Asylum Seekers, Refugees and Detainees (CARAD) has experienced more than a doubling in demand for their emergency relief services, including their Foodbank program as people seeking asylum struggle to keep food on the table.

Joanna Josephs, General Manager of CARAD says an advocacy network representing a number of organisations has written to Premier Mark McGowan requesting emergency financial support for people seeking asylum saying, “We have seen other state governments step in to help fill the gap left by the Federal Government’s response and we hope that the Premier will be willing to do the same in WA.”

Recently, the Uniting Church WA encouraged its members to write to the Federal Government to request that people on temporary visas are included in the COVID-19 relief measures.

Rev Francis said, “This Refugee Week the Uniting Church repeats its calls for change to refugee policies that continue to see people stuck in limbo. Whether that is people still in offshore locations, onshore detention facilities, or people on short-term temporary visas – we must be able to provide better solutions that open a pathway for people to reconnect with family and begin living with freedom.”

***For media enquiries and interviews,
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