

Asylum seekers – a Christian response

An open letter to our Australian community

We have a dream.

Baptist Care Australia dreams of a fair and ethical society, a society which provides generously and justly for the most vulnerable including asylum seekers, in a way that reflects the Christian values of our society.

On the 50th anniversary of Martin Luther King's most famous 'I have a dream' speech, we share the same dream. We dream of a society with a passion for justice, a society that stands up against anyone who turns their back on those in need. A society that stands up against mistreatment and abuse. Rejecting such injustice goes to the heart of our Christian beliefs.

We do not see our government leaders taking this stand. As a result, Baptist Care Australia's Board has resolved to speak out against the policies being created and used against asylum seekers. We will not sit by and watch this any longer.

When did we, as a society let justice escape us and be reduced to bickering and bargaining over rights? When did we start to let others tell us what to be frightened of and who?

Our members employ over 8,000 people nationally, many of whom are immigrants and refugees. We know, from first hand experience and our Christian faith that the fruits of the Spirit, including generosity and compassion, are the foundation for a vibrant and healthy civil society. When we deny compassion, blame others for their circumstances, avoid responsibility and turn our backs on those in need, we have clearly lost our moral compass. It is a bitter harvest we will reap.

We know from long personal experience that asylum seekers are ordinary people like us with families, children and older dependents. They come to us with skills they can share and they come to us in need.

The drive to brand asylum seekers as economic migrants trying to take advantage of our good nature and then to propose that the hard line on asylum seekers is 'in their best interest', is unacceptable propaganda to us as a faith based community. Our role is to advocate for those unable to speak for themselves.

We call on the Australian community to support a system where asylum seekers are able to become productive, contributing to our society, teaching us new skills and ways of living. We call on the community to ask for access to English language classes, training, education, health support and the right to work for asylum seekers.

We ask that Australia meets its international humanitarian obligations under the UN Refugee Convention.



Dr Lucy Morris
Chairperson Baptist Care Australia

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