

MEDIA RELEASE

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Baptists oppose offshore and mandatory detention

The National Council of Australian Baptist Ministries has urged the federal government to process claims for refugee status within 90 days, and called on churches to oppose mandatory detention of asylum seekers and refugees.

The National Chair of Australian Baptist Ministries, Rev Dr John Beasy, announced the policy which was adopted at a National Council meeting held in Melbourne on November 23.

In the wide-ranging statement, ABM urged the Gillard government to place all child asylum seekers in appropriate community care while their claims for refugee status were assessed, and to cease the practice of sending unaccompanied minors to third countries.

The statement called on all Australians to oppose xenophobia and discrimination on the basis of race, ethnicity, culture and religion, and challenged Australian politicians to demonstrate their moral convictions and to exercise non-partisan leadership in debates on immigration and refugee policy.

The new policy also called on the federal government to increase Australia's refugee intake over the next five years.

The ABM National Council encouraged its more than 900 member churches to oppose both offshore and mandatory detention of asylum seekers and refugees, to extend hospitality to asylum seekers and refugees, and to freely share with those in need.

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