



MEDIA RELEASE

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Give Us a Sign Project Speaks Out on Asylum Seekers

A network of Christian churches is speaking with one voice this Lent, calling for compassion of asylum seekers through the *Give us a Sign* project.

The *Give us a Sign* project seeks to engage churches and organisations across Australia in displaying positive messages about asylum seekers on their public noticeboards during the six weeks of Lent, 2015.

The project has emerged out of conversations within the Anglican, Catholic and Uniting Churches in the Hunter and Central Coast and is endorsed by the respective church leaders.

"Lent is an important time in the year for people of faith, and this Lent I am glad to join together with our Anglican and Uniting Church brothers and sisters in a common cause for the good of our society," said Bishop Bill Wright, Catholic Diocese of Maitland-Newcastle.

"The *Give us a Sign* initiative provides a platform for people throughout the community to call for compassion for asylum seekers – by pledging and displaying their commitment through public signs and messaging in each faith. I strongly encourage all people of the Newcastle, Hunter and Central Coast regions to get involved and show your support within your local community – either by displaying one of the recommended messages on your local church sign, or by making your own sign."

The project aims to promote a more compassionate society for the sake of vulnerable people, especially with regard to asylum seekers. Every year, millions of people around the world are forced to flee their homes and face a long and difficult journey finding security and protection.

"If I was in a war torn country fleeing for my life, I would hope that a decent country like Australia would be a place of compassion and refuge. *Give us a Sign* is a campaign designed to encourage compassion, in a time when this nation's political discussion too often encourages us to demonise the disparate stranger," said Rev'd Warwick Cadenhead, Chairperson of The Hunter Presbytery of the Uniting Church in Australia.

Bishop Greg Thompson, Anglican Bishop of Newcastle, encourages every suburb and every town in Australia to speak with one voice.

"May our communities be places of welcome and hospitality and let us encourage our wider community to share in that hospitality to strangers and aliens in search of a home," Bishop Greg Thompson said.

To get involved, visit www.giveusasign.org and choose a sign for each week of Lent from suggested messages. Display your message on Tuesdays during Lent. After displaying your sign, take a photo and share it on the *Give us a Sign* Facebook page and Twitter.

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Image caption: Bishop Bill Wright, Catholic Bishop of Maitland-Newcastle, and Bishop Greg Thompson, Anglican Bishop of Newcastle, come together for a common cause for the good of the city.



Image caption: Rev'd Warwick Cadenhead, Chairperson of The Hunter Presbytery of the Uniting Church in Australia, is an advocate for the rights of asylum seekers.



Image caption: One of the signs out the front of The Catholic Diocese of Maitland-Newcastle office.



ANGLICAN DIOCESE
OF NEWCASTLE



Editorial: Calling for Compassion of Asylum Seekers

Ahmed is an asylum seeker who arrived by boat. He was forced to flee his country after he, along with other civilians, were attacked by Government militia.

In his homeland Ahmed was employed as an engineer, and is a classically trained musician.

Ahmed lives in the community and is awaiting a decision on his refugee status. He is not allowed to work or study, and lives in one room where he sleeps on the floor. He has one chair. He cannot afford furniture and even if he could, says it would be burdensome as his accommodation is transient.

As contact with this family endangers their lives, Ahmed does not speak to them often. To find purpose in his life as he awaits his immigration decision, he spends his time teaching English to fellow asylum seekers, and often acts as their interpreter. One of his greatest pleasures is to offer the gift of his music.

He is extremely warm, generous, and inquisitive to learn everything he can about his new country. Ahmed is especially interested in our colloquialisms, which make him laugh out loud when explained. He says he wants to study and work hard, and become the best Australian citizen he can be.

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