



Uniting Church in Australia National Assembly

MEDIA RELEASE - 24 April 2025

Uniting Church in Australia Opposes Proposal to Re-Assess Palestinian Visas

The Uniting Church in Australia strongly opposes Opposition Leader Peter Dutton's election commitment yesterday that under a Coalition government, the visas of Palestinians from Gaza would be re-assessed.

We reject any implication of this proposal that people fleeing the horrors of war inherently pose a national security risk. Such rhetoric is not only without evidence, but risks fuelling racial prejudice, discrimination and fear within our community.

“Gaza is in the grip of war, occupation and catastrophic humanitarian crisis,” said Rev Charissa Suli, President of the Uniting Church in Australia. “Its people endure unrelenting violence, the destruction of homes, hospitals and essential infrastructure, the injury and death of loved ones, and the trauma of forced displacement.”

“These people are not threats to be feared, but survivors in need of safety and shelter.”

“Australia has a moral, spiritual and humanitarian responsibility to those fleeing war and violence. We must not close the door on those in need or unjustly target an already traumatised community. Our visa processes are extensive and rigorous. What is needed now is not suspicion, but solidarity.”

“At a time when fear is being weaponised in political debate, we call on our leaders to rise above division. Please act with moral courage, integrity and compassion. Model a vision for a nation that embraces and sees the potential in every person who calls this land home.”

In this same spirit, such leadership must also confront the deepening divides we see in our society, including growing intolerance and hate.

“The Uniting Church has long and unequivocally rejected antisemitism in all its forms,” said Rev Suli. “At this time, we are also highly alarmed by the escalating rise in Islamophobia. We long for a nation where all people of every faith and background can live with dignity, security and hope.”

Since our birth in 1977, the Uniting Church in Australia has sought to be guided by God’s call to love our neighbour, welcome the stranger and seek justice for the oppressed. As Scripture reminds us, *“You shall not oppress the foreigner, for you were foreigners in the land of Egypt”* (Exodus 23:9).

“When a nation closes its heart to the cries of the suffering, it does not grow in strength—it shrinks in soul,” said Rev Suli. “True power is not found in fear-driven policies, but in the courage to welcome the stranger, to stand with the wounded, and to build peace across every border.”

The Uniting Church stands in unwavering solidarity with all those impacted so immensely by war and displacement. We stand against any policy or political narrative that dehumanises people seeking refuge or seeks to divide our communities.

ENDS

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