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For immediate release

UNITING CHURCH WELCOMES DETENTION POLICY CHANGES

The Uniting Church in Australia has today welcomed the detention policy changes announced by the Minister for Immigration, Senator Chris Evans.

“The Uniting Church has been advocating for an end to the mandatory, arbitrary and indefinite detention of asylum seekers for many years,” said Rev. Elenie Poulos, National Director of UnitingJustice Australia.

“While the principle of mandatory detention remains, we are pleased that detention will only be used while health, security and identity checks are carried out and that children will never be detained again.”

“The new processes for independent review and an expanded role for the Immigration Ombudsman are major improvements. While the excision of territories from our migration zone remains, we do welcome the extension of the provision of publicly funded advice and assistance to asylum seekers arriving at excised places.

“The Uniting Church, through its members, ministers, and agencies, has served those in detention centres over many years, and we have been, together with many others, calling for changes to a harsh and damaging policy that unnecessarily punished already traumatised people, all too often causing irreparable harm to people’s health.

“We congratulate the Government on some very significant changes to immigration detention policy and on its statement of ‘Immigration Detention Values’. Australia will now be able to better meet our obligations under the Refugee Convention and provide appropriate care for people who have fled situations of persecution and only seek our protection,” said Rev. Poulos.

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Rev. Elenie Poulos is available for comment.