

NATIONAL GATHERING 2013: STATEMENTS ON MATTERS OF PUBLIC INTEREST

This document includes statements on matters of public interest discussed and endorsed by the 2013 National Gathering. The statements concern Palestine, Reform of the Australian Constitution, and Cash for Containers.

PALESTINE

Wellspring Community Call to Australian Christians: April 2013: It's Time for Palestine
A Wellspring Community response to the document *Kairos Palestine: A Moment of Truth – A Word of Faith, Hope and Love from the Heart of Palestinian Suffering* (2009).

In 2009 Leaders of 13 major churches in Jerusalem issued *Kairos Palestine* on behalf of their people. For us, as members of the Wellspring Community gathered at Collaroy in April 2013, this is our *Kairos* moment – our moment of truth, our time to act.

We are called to respond to the deepening suffering of our sisters and brothers in Palestine under occupation by Israel. We stand in faithfulness and solidarity with those Palestinians and Israelis who are working for a peace based on justice.

We believe it is necessary to challenge the silence of many Christian people in the face of the continuing injustice of dispossession and the denial of basic human and political rights. We agree with the *Kairos* document that the occupation by Israel is 'an evil and a sin' (*Kairos Palestine* 4.2.1).

Therefore:-

- we remind our churches of the urgent situation in Palestine. We challenge all Christians to engage in prayerful study of the *Kairos Palestine* document, in openness to what the Spirit is now saying to the churches (Rev 2:7). We must read the signs of the times and act in obedience to God's will (Matt16:3);
- we ask our churches and theological institutions to challenge how the Bible has been used to justify oppression and injustice. We encourage the use of educational resources to raise awareness, enrich worship and challenge misperceptions and apathy (see www.worldweekofpeace.org);
- we ask our churches and theological institutions to challenge how the Bible has been used to justify oppression and injustice. We encourage the use of educational resources to raise awareness, enrich worship and challenge misperceptions and apathy (see worldweekofpeace.org);
- we urge Christians to participate only in those pilgrimages to Israel/Palestine which give opportunity to listen to the experiences of Palestinians and engage with the harsh realities of occupation. Palestinian Christians have called us all to 'come and see' (*Kairos Palestine* 6.2);
- we support Palestinians in their non-violent resistance to Israeli injustice and oppression.

- we call on Christians to pressure on the Australian Government to be even-handed in its policies with Israel and the Palestinian Authority, and to respect each people's right to land and security.

These are just some of the responses we can make to the question from Palestinian Christians: 'Are you able to help us get our freedom back, for this is the only way you can help the two peoples attain justice, peace, security and love?' (Kairos Palestine 6:1).

Difficult though these tasks may be, we seize this 'kairos moment' with conviction and hope. We recognise our responsibility as followers of Jesus Christ to speak the prophetic word with courage.

REFORM OF THE AUSTRALIAN CONSTITUTION

Wellspring Community supports:

the proposed changes to the Australian Constitution which will recognise the First Australians, the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, as custodians of this land long before European settlement. Wellspring Community also supports the removal of discriminatory and racist clauses from the Constitution which currently allow the Australian Federal and State parliaments to enact laws which could discriminate against people on the basis of their race.

By accepting these changes, Australian citizens will acknowledge the unique languages, cultures and heritages of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and their contributions to this nation.

Wellspring Community urges Christians to become informed about the proposed amendments to the Australian Constitution, and to show solidarity with First Australians by talking with and listening to them, praying, speaking out, and writing about reforms to achieve healing and justice under the law for all people in our land.

April, 2013

CASH FOR CONTAINERS STATEMENT

As members of the Wellspring Community, a dispersed Australia-wide ecumenical Christian community, committed to a sustainable Australia we call on the governments of Australia to commit to the introduction of a national Container Deposit System in 2013.

Some of our members live in South Australia and tell us how effective their container deposits have been for more than thirty years now in reducing litter and increasing recycling of beverage containers. It is an appropriate form of extended producer responsibility.

We were appalled to learn that Coca-Cola Amatil, Schweppes and Lion took legal action to stop the one-year new Cash for Containers scheme in the Northern Territory in early 2013. The benefits of this scheme to the Northern Territory community and environment far outweigh the inconvenience experienced by these big beverage companies. We applaud the COAG decision to grant the NT a permanent exemption from the Commonwealth Mutual Recognition Act, thereby re-instating their Cash for Containers scheme in August 2013.

We trust that the same protection will be offered to any other States or Territories who move to introduce their own container deposit legislation. In this spirit, we call on the governments of Australia to resist pressure from the beverage industry and introduce a national container deposit system without delay.

A national container deposit system is a proven solution to beverage container litter and our national recycling rate for bottles and cans of only 40%. We believe it is legislation for the common good, which will achieve - cleaner communities, parks, rivers, oceans; new forms of community income; higher resource recovery rates for plastic, glass and metal beverage containers.

In peace,

Wellspring Community

August 2013

This statement is based on a letter signed by Members of the Wellspring Community at its bi-annual gathering to the Prime Minister and Leader of the Opposition in April 2013 – adapted to acknowledge recent developments – in the spirit of the original letter, by Lisa Wriley.