

## Brisbane Christians Prepare to Shine the Light on Tax Dodging prior to G20

With the eyes of the world on Brisbane when the world's leaders arrive for the G20 Summit next month (14-16 Nov), local Christians are preparing to make the most of being in the spotlight.

While the QLD state government is doing all it can to shine the light on Australia's 'sunshine capital' in the interests of tourism, the churches of Brisbane are banding together to shine the light on tax dodging and corruption in the interests of the world's poor.

The national Micah Challenge campaign is partnering with Brisbane churches and other networks in a weekend of worship, action and advocacy events called 'Shine the Light Brisbane' – just one week prior to the G20 Summit (7-9 November).

"Through this weekend we're aiming to raise awareness about the impact of tax dodging and corruption on developing nations," said John Beckett, Director of Micah Challenge Australia.

"Highly conservative estimates show that poor nations lose more than \$160 billion each year through corporate tax dodging, which is more money than they receive annually in foreign aid. This is money which rightfully belongs to the citizens of these countries and should be being used to provide essential services like healthcare, education, infrastructure and water."

According to Mr Beckett, whilst financial secrecy and tax dodging are on the agenda for discussion at the G20, the risk is that the discussion may not result in concrete action. Micah Challenge is also concerned that the decisions made could primarily benefit wealthy countries represented at the table, while ignoring the needs of developing nations.

"Most people don't realise that the vast majority of money flowing out of developing countries is not stolen by corrupt politicians and dictators, but is rather pulled out by large multinational corporations who exploit loopholes in the global tax system to shift their profits away from the countries they operate within," said Mr Beckett.

To draw attention to the tropical tax havens typically used for corporate profit-shifting, Micah Challenge is inviting Brisbane Christians to join them in creating the *World's Biggest Mock Tax Haven* in the Brisbane CBD one week before the G20 leaders meet. With palm trees and mocktails, beach chairs and briefcases, hundreds of Christians dressed in suits will highlight the way secrecy in the global financial system is robbing the poor of more than US\$160 billion each year.

In partnership with the global EXPOSED campaign, Micah Challenge will hand over an Open Letter to G20 leaders at the mock tax haven event signed by over 90 global church leaders – representing 1 billion Christians worldwide who are calling on the G20 to take action on corruption, within multinationals and by government officials.

According to Amanda Jackson, the Head of Campaigns and Advocacy for Micah Challenge International (based in the UK), Christians from over 172 nations have joined the global call against tax dodging and corruption and are now looking to Australians to channel their voices into the G20.

“We’ve been talking to people all over the world about the journey to Brisbane and now we are here,” said Ms Jackson.

“Many thousands of Christians around the world are following what is happening with great interest. Will Australia lead the way in tackling tax injustice?”

To add your voice to Brisbane Christians, and others around the world who are urging G20 leaders to take action on tax dodging and corruption, go to [www.shinethelight.com.au](http://www.shinethelight.com.au).

-ENDS-

**Available for Interviews:**

- John Beckett, National Coordinator, Micah Challenge Australia
- Amanda Jackson, Head of Campaigns and Advocacy, Micah Challenge International (UK)
- Bishop Efraim Tendero, National Director of the Philippine Council of Evangelical Churches  
(Available for interviews from Nov 6<sup>th</sup>)
- Rev Dr Suzanne Matala, Head of the Zambia Council of Churches  
(Available for interviews from Nov 6<sup>th</sup>)
- Benton Wecker, Micah Challenge Campaigner and a member of Bracken Ridge Baptist Church community in Brisbane.

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*Micah Challenge is a global movement of Christians speaking out against poverty and injustice in support of the Millennium Development Goals. In Australia, more than 50 aid and development agencies, as well as churches, schools, groups and individual Christians endorse the campaign.*  
[www.micahchallenge.org.au](http://www.micahchallenge.org.au).

*Shine the Light Brisbane (7-9 Nov) is a weekend of worship, action and advocacy to the G20 on issues of global poverty and injustice, coordinated by Micah Challenge with Brisbane churches and partners. It involves a Worship and Justice Night for Brisbane young adults, with guest speakers Tim Costello (CEO, World Vision Australia) and Bishop Ephraim (National Director of the Philippine Council of Evangelical Churches); a prayer and reflection service; the ‘world’s biggest mock tax haven’ public event and special Sunday services focused on the issue of tax dodging and corruption. For more details visit [www.micahchallenge.org.au/brisbane](http://www.micahchallenge.org.au/brisbane).*