

## Hillsong Mobilises Thousands to Advocate for Justice

Thousands of Christians at Hillsong Conference 2013 this week have added their voice to the growing *Movement to End Poverty* petition, calling on the Australian Government to fulfil its obligations to the global poor.

In the lead up to this year's Federal election, Hillsong Church has joined with development agencies, churches, denominations and individuals across the nation as part of the Micah Challenge coalition, and for the first time used its annual conference as a platform for Christian advocacy.

"We're so pleased that Senior Pastors Brian and Bobbie Houston and the whole church have shown their support for the cause of Micah Challenge at Hillsong Conference this year," said John Beckett National Coordinator of Micah Challenge Australia.

"The Pentecostal churches, and particularly the Australian Christian Churches, now represent a large and growing sector of the church and therefore a key constituency in Australian society," said Mr Beckett.

After joining with other senior church leaders in a Micah Challenge lobbying visit to Canberra, Executive Pastor for Hillsong Church Donna Crouch is passionate about seeing the church use its voice to ensure justice in Australia and across the world.

"I'm becoming increasingly aware of the importance of advocacy in achieving real and lasting societal change, and I believe there is great power when the church stands together in unity under an umbrella like Micah Challenge," said Ms Crouch.

"The church is generally good at helping people in poverty, but it's time for us to start addressing the causes of poverty. To do that, we need to raise our voices and speak up for those who can't speak for themselves."

John Beckett and Donna Crouch were both joined by Christian parliamentarian Louise Markus in an advocacy workshop on day two of the conference.

After praising Micah Challenge as one the best campaigns in the nation, the Federal Member for Macquarie assured the conference delegates that "together our voices can make a difference".

During the week, thousands of attendees from churches all across Australia have been educated on the UN Millennium Development Goals which aim to halve poverty by 2015, and joined in calling on the Government to increase Australian aid to the international target of 0.7% of Australia's national income by 2020.

Conference delegates have also sent emails to their local Members of Parliament with "halve poverty selfie" photos throughout the week, thereby urging all sides of politics to put poverty alleviation firmly on their policy agendas in the lead up to the next election.

-ENDS-

**John Beckett, Micah Challenge's National Coordinator, is available for interviews.**



Image Caption: *As Micah Challenge's campaign takes the stage at Hillsong Conference 2013, all 20,000 delegates in the All Phones Arena are encouraged to 'shine their light' and take action against global poverty.*

More images available: <https://www.box.com/s/2ogmxpr46jlo4gwoen1e>

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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).*