

Share a meal, share a story for Refugee Week

Australian Catholic University (ACU) hosted, 'Share a meal, share a story', an inaugural Refugee Week dinner event at the North Sydney Campus this week.

ACU's Thomas More Law School Deputy Head Dr Catherine Renshaw, Pro Bono Coordinator Dominic Cudmore and Campus Ministry's Pastoral Associate Dony Rodriguez worked together to organise the event in order to raise awareness of both the program and the broader issues faced by refugees.

The keynote speaker at the Refugee Week dinner was Victor Klein, a barrister and founder of the Refugee Law Project, an initiative that seeks to help unrepresented asylum seekers by offering ACU law students the opportunity to provide pro bono legal assistance as part of their course requirements.

Attendees at the dinner also heard from Najib, a refugee from Afghanistan who is currently fighting a decision that renders him a non-genuine refugee in the eyes of the law. Najib's home town was recently raided by the Taliban and there would be significant concerns for his safety if he is ultimately required to return to his home country.

Dr Renshaw said the event was inspired by ACU law student Danielle Lomborn.

"Danielle wanted to advocate for and celebrate the contribution of refugees in Australian society after her awareness and perspective of the issues facing refugees changed when she began meeting them and hearing their personal stories while volunteering with the Refugee Law Project," said Dr Renshaw.

"We would like to extend out thanks to Danielle for dreaming up the initiative, as well as staff from the Thomas More Law School and the Office of General Counsel for sponsoring the event. We hope to continue this event every year in line with Refugee Week."

Mr Rodriguez from Campus Ministry said working to promote the needs of refugees is a central element of Catholic social teaching.

"The Catholic ethos has been greatly influential in thinking about what it means to act justly and form a fair and flourishing society. Its influence extends to both Christian and secular circles, including in discussions of modern human rights, ethical principles, and environmental justice," said Mr Rodriguez.

At ACU Campus Ministry we are happy to serve the vulnerable in our society, particularly refugees who often face many obstacles. Jesus himself and the Holy Family were refugees themselves fleeing from Nazareth to Egypt, so supporting, loving and welcoming refugees is as close to the University's Catholic mission as it gets!"

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