

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE - 30 MARCH 2023

CAPSA calls on Catholic communities to Walk for Justice for Refugees this Palm Sunday

The Catholic Alliance for People Seeking Asylum (CAPSA) will join people across Australia in marking Palm Sunday by walking alongside people of all faiths and backgrounds to demand justice for refugees and people seeking asylum.

CAPSA, co-convened by Jesuit Social Services and Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS) Australia, supports individuals, schools, parishes and Catholic organisations across education, health, refugee and social services in their advocacy for fair and humane treatment for people seeking asylum in Australia.

Palm Sunday has long seen Australians gathering to bring attention to situations which need a more just, compassionate and peaceful response. For many years that situation has been the plight of the millions of refugees in our world, and more particularly those who have sought asylum in Australia. For Christians, Palm Sunday is a celebration of Jesus' entry into Jerusalem, a moment of triumph on his way to paying the ultimate price for championing the most vulnerable.

Co-Chairs of CAPSA Julie Edwards, CEO of Jesuit Social Services, and Tamara Domicelj, Country Director of Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS) Australia emphasise the importance of taking the time to come together in solidarity to stand, regardless of faith, age or occupation, alongside those who have sought safety and protection in Australia.

"Despite positive progress, such as the Government's announcement to provide pathways to permanency for those currently on Temporary Protection Visas (TPVs) and Safe Haven Enterprise Visas (SHEVs) in February, thousands of refugees and people seeking asylum both in Australia and held in offshore detention, are yet to access justice", said Ms Edwards.

CAPSA, along with many others in civil society, welcomed this progression to permanency for over 19,000 people. However, since this announcement, there have been a number of worrying developments including the Senate voting against the opportunity to safely evacuate all remaining refugees and people seeking asylum remaining on Nauru and PNG.

Tim McKenna, Chair of St Vincent de Paul's Refugee Network and CAPSA Advisory Group member, reflected: "On Palm Sunday we seek *'Justice for refugees'* including permanent protection for all, adequate support while it is needed and processes that are fair, respectful and efficient."

Jenny Collins-White, Manager of Catholic Mission's education and formation programs, and member of the CAPSA Advisory Group, emphasised the importance of working persistently for justice alongside refugees and people seeking asylum - beyond the Palm Sunday walks:

"Marching on Palm Sunday is one way the broader community can show their compassion and support— but our work does not end here. We encourage people to join CAPSA to stay connected with opportunities to support more humane actions towards refugees and people seeking asylum," she says.

Together with others, on Palm Sunday and beyond, CAPSA will continue to advocate for an Australia that welcomes refugees and people seeking asylum.

Media enquiries: Kathryn Kernohan, 0409 901 248 or kathryn.kernohan@jss.org.au