

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE – JUNE 20, 2023

## **CAPSA celebrates Refugee Week and World Refugee Day, calls on the Federal Government to end offshore detention and extend permanent protection**

The Catholic Alliance for People Seeking Asylum (CAPSA) joins communities across Australia and the world to mark World Refugee Day today and to celebrate Refugee Week.

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.

World Refugee Day is held every year to commemorate the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees, originally marking its 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary and first year of celebration in 2001. It is an important time to reflect on the challenges and experiences of refugees and people seeking asylum, including barriers to family reunion, uncertainty about the future for people on bridging visas, and drastic cuts to essential welfare services.

Sally Parnell, Acting CEO of Jesuit Social Services, and Tamara Domicelj, Country Director of Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS) Australia share their thoughts on this day's significance in coming together to celebrate and honour refugees and people seeking asylum in our communities.

“Today is an important opportunity to honour the incredible resilience of refugees and people seeking asylum. They are our neighbours, friends and colleagues and they make up an integral part of the Australian community. Let us welcome our neighbours who are seeking safety in Australia”, said Ms Parnell.

Running from the 18 to the 24 June this year, Refugee Week is also an important opportunity to take the time to acknowledge the ongoing contributions of refugees and people seeking asylum in Australia and around the world, and to reflect on what this year's theme ‘finding freedom’ means.

“The theme ‘finding freedom’ speaks to the challenges that people seeking asylum and refugees face all over the world, in fleeing danger and seeking enduring safety,” said Ms Domicelj. “Rather than creating barriers for people to finding freedom in Australia, we need to be supporting people seeking asylum and refugees, through a robust humanitarian program and as they await determination of their claims for protection within our communities”

In light of this year’s theme of finding freedom, CAPSA welcomes the Federal Government announcements to giving pathways to permanent protection to those on Temporary Protection Visa’s and Save Haven Enterprise Visas in February this year. This means that thousands of people who have sought freedom for as long as ten years can finally experience it.

However, there is still so much more that needs to be done. CAPSA will continue to advocate for the pathway to permanency to be extended to all people who are owed international protection, including those who were medevaced to Australia, and continue to advocate for the Federal Government to end offshore detention.

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