

MEDIA RELEASE – JUNE 20, 2023

## **Jesuit Social Services celebrates World Refugee Day**

Jesuit Social Services stands in solidarity and celebrates the positive contributions of refugees and people seeking asylum to acknowledge World Refugee Day on Tuesday 20 June and partner with Refugee Week, which runs until 24 June.

“Refugee Week is an important opportunity to acknowledge the difficulties faced by people who have sought safety in Australia, to celebrate their strength and resilience, and to reiterate our ambition for a compassionate and just immigration system that gives refugees and people seeking asylum every opportunity to thrive in Australia,” said Jesuit Social Services’ Acting CEO Sally Parnell.

“This year’s Refugee Week theme of ‘finding freedom’ reminds us of the peril and persecution faced by people who seek safety in Australia, and of our duty to welcome them and their families into our connected and flourishing communities.”

Jesuit Social Services has worked alongside newly arrived migrants for nearly 30 years, and currently supports newly arrived families and communities in Melbourne through the Settlement Program, which accompanies those from a refugee or culturally diverse background to improve social interaction, build personal capacity and foster a sense of belonging in Australia.

One Settlement Program participant, Mariam\*, arrived in Australia with her two daughters on refugee visas after fleeing a conflict zone and spending years living in a refugee camp. Mariam’s Jesuit Social Services support worker spent six months carefully building a relationship of trust and safety, which enabled Mariam to connect with the community services she had previously retreated from due to distrust, including social housing, wellbeing support at her daughters’ schools, English classes and specialist medical services.

“Mariam’s experience highlights the trauma and disconnect many newly arrived people sadly experience, but also the significant role a trusted advocate can play in enabling individuals and families to access opportunities to lead safe and healthy lives in the community,” said Ms Parnell.

“On World Refugee Day, and during World Refugee Week, we celebrate the integral role played by refugees and people seeking asylum in Australia, and contemplate the role we can all play in enabling those who have sought freedom in Australia to enliven their rights and thrive.”

Jesuit Social Services co-convenes the Catholic Alliance for People Seeking Asylum (CAPSA) alongside Jesuit Refugee Service Australia (JRS Australia), which engages the broader Catholic community towards an Australia that provides safety and welcome to refugees and people seeking asylum. The organisation is also a proud partner of Refugee Week, which is coordinated by the Refugee Council of Australia. For further resources, visit [www.refugeeweek.org.au](http://www.refugeeweek.org.au).

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