

Catholic Mission Calls for Parish Support for Refugee Families Sponsorship Initiative for a New Life in Australia

On the occasion of Refugee Week, Catholic Mission is inviting parishes to take action and open their hearts and arms to sponsor refugee families to help them to settle into their new life in Australia.

The Community Refugee Integration and Settlement Pilot (CRISP) is designed for community members to build social networks to welcome a family group who has been granted a humanitarian visa but is still waiting to arrive in Australia.

The Australian Government has dedicated 1500 humanitarian visas within the CRISP program and groups are matched with a refugee household that has been identified as in urgent need of resettlement by the United Nations High Commission for Refugees. The program is supported by Catholic Mission in partnership with the End of Child Detention Coalition (ECDC).

It offers parishes and community groups the opportunity to sponsor newly arrived refugee families and assist them in their first year of settlement in Australian society. A crucial support for many who have fled their home country and do not have a support network to help them settle in a new country.

“The families that we’ve been privileged to support speak about the importance of their new Australian friends helping them understand and navigate unfamiliar systems. The help given eases the stress of a huge transition,” says Jenny Collins-White, Advocacy Programs Manager at Catholic Mission.

The support provided is both tangible and pastoral, as many families are going through a long and exhausting administrative path. According to the Refugee Council of Australia, the average processing time for permanent protection visas is 913 days.

In the meantime, many refugees are denied full working rights and access to Medicare, making their situation highly precarious with the constant fear of their visa being rejected. In April this year, 73,750 refugees were awaiting deportation after their protection had been denied.

“The stress of waiting adds another level of hardship for these families who have already lost so much,” Jenny added.

Within the last two years, Catholic Mission and the ECDC have supported St Vincent’s Parish in Ashfield, NSW, to sponsor three families to settle into their new lives and make Australia their home.

To provide further support, the ECDC has developed a legal structure as an auspice body to enable more parish groups to take up this opportunity. Parishes are encouraged to open their minds and hearts and welcome families living in refugee contexts globally.

The need to find welcoming groups is even more urgent as the global situation worsens. The recent UNHCR report noted that by the end of 2022, the number of people displaced by war, persecution, violence, and

human rights abuses stood at a record 108.4 million, up 19.1 million on a year earlier, which was the biggest ever increase.

Of the global total, 35.3 million were refugees, people who crossed an international border to find safety, while a greater share – 58 percent, representing 62.5 million people – were displaced in their home countries due to conflict and violence.

Visit catholicmission.org.au/advocacy and learn more about the process of becoming a Community Refugee Sponsorship host.

ENDS

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About Catholic Mission

Catholic Mission is the Australian agency of the Pontifical Mission Societies – the Catholic Church’s global organisation dedicated to continuing Jesus Christ’s mission in the world: that all may have life to the full. Catholic Mission contributes funding and project support to critical church-run initiatives in Africa, Asia, Oceania, and South America. These include spiritual formation, pastoral care, education, health, sanitation, and agricultural programs. Here in Australia, we form people to go out and be missionary in their professional and personal lives; to pray, advocate and act for those on the margins. Catholic Mission has offices in 27 Australian dioceses.