

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE – SEPTEMBER 1, 2023

CAPSA launches National Week of Prayer and Action 2023

The Catholic Alliance for People Seeking Asylum (CAPSA) has launched its National Week of Prayer and Action, a week of events and action from September 4th to 8th that aims to engage the Australian Catholic community in solidarity with people seeking asylum.

This year's theme, 'Freedom to Live', comes from Pope Francis' forthcoming message for World Day of Migrants and Refugees on September 24th, titled 'Free to choose whether to migrate or stay' – in which the Holy Father calls for a shared commitment to eliminating the causes of forced migration.

"In whatever place we decide to build our future, in the country of our birth or elsewhere, the important thing is that there always be a community ready to welcome, protect, promote, and integrate everyone, without distinctions and without excluding anyone," he writes.

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

Co-Chairs Julie Edwards, Jesuit Social Services CEO, and Tamara Domicelj, JRS Australia Country Director, said that the National Week of Prayer and Action will focus on what we can all do to create a community where people seeking asylum have the freedom to live.

"National Week of Prayer and Action is an invitation to and celebration of solidarity. Together, we will face the challenges and barriers to living freely and flourishing in the community that people who seek safety in Australia face, and take meaningful steps through prayer, reflection, advocacy and action towards a more compassionate and welcoming society," said Ms Domicelj.

One of the central events during the National Week of Prayer and Action is a webinar, Freedom to Live for Refugees and People Seeking Asylum, on September 5th. The webinar will explore what freedom to live means for refugees and people seeking asylum. It will also examine the current barriers and challenges preventing them from having the freedom to live their lives. It will also provide practical information about how all members of the community can take action to support people seeking asylum.

Ms Edwards said that Pope Francis' message is a timely reminder of the social and political causes of forced migration – including global conflict, economic instability, and environmental destruction – and invites the CAPSA community to join in National Week of Prayer and Action to stand up to face these challenges.

"We invite the Australian Catholic community to stand in solidarity with people seeking asylum by learning more about the causes of forced migration, reflecting, and taking further action. This may include writing to your MP, speaking with friends and family, signing petitions, and participating in awareness-raising events including CAPSA's National Week of Prayer and Action webinar," she said.



“An integral part of addressing the underlying drivers of displacement is activating and engaging communities towards love and justice, which is the opportunity presented by the National Week of Prayer and Action. Coming together to reflect and act is an important way we can transform our systems to build a society in which everyone seeking asylum has the freedom to live.”

Register for the Freedom to Live for Refugees and People Seeking Asylum webinar at events.humanitix.com/capsa-national-week-of-prayer-and-action and learn more about National Week of Prayer and Action 2023 at capsa.org.au.

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