

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE – 18 JUNE, 2025

Refugee Week a timely call for Federal Government to do more

Refugee Week (15TH -21ST June) is a critical reminder that the Federal Government must ensure the safety and wellbeing of people who have sought asylum in Australia. It is also an opportunity to celebrate the positive contributions refugees from a wide array of cultures have made to Australian life, says the Catholic Alliance for People Seeking Asylum (CAPSA).

“This year’s Refugee Week theme, *Finding Freedom: Diversity in Community*, encourages us to reflect on stories of people leaving their homes in fear of harm and persecution and be resolute in our responsibility to welcome them with open arms to live safe and free lives,” says Jesuit Social Services Acting CEO Michael Livingstone. Jesuit Social Services convenes CAPSA.

Refugee Week, coordinated by the Refugee Council of Australia, features special events and performances around Australia, from markets to musical performances.

“This week is a great opportunity to better educate ourselves about the refugee experience, and the issues refugees are facing here and around the world. I encourage everyone to engage with what’s on offer during the week,” Mr Livingstone says.

Refugee Week also marks the 10 year anniversary of CAPSA – an alliance which works to change harmful policies and promote more compassionate treatment of refugees and people seeking asylum.

During the recent federal election campaign, CAPSA and its member organisations called on political parties to commit to policies that uphold the dignity and rights of refugees and people seeking asylum in Australia.

“We believe the re-elected Labor Government has an opportunity to significantly improve outcomes for refugees and people seeking asylum. This could be done immediately by ending uncertainty for people seeking asylum, providing fair and timely pathways to permanency in Australia,” says Mr Livingstone.

“Additionally, we call on the Government to ensure people seeking asylum have access to work and study rights, as well as other public services including Medicare, housing and financial support; to end offshore detention and processing and quickly re-settle all people in Australia; and to increase Australia’s humanitarian intake and expand the existing community support program which covers most expenses and assists people to become part of the community.”

“This Refugee Week, we urge the re- Government to show moral leadership, leveraging its significant election win to ensure Australia’s treatment of people seeking asylum reflects our collective values of solidarity, compassion, respect for human dignity, and our desire to do good.”

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