



MEDIA RELEASE

Thursday 19 March 2026

Australians invited to walk together for refugee justice

Joint media release by St Vincent de Paul Society of Australia and Jesuit Refugee Service Australia

The St Vincent de Paul Society National Council and Jesuit Refugee Service Australia (JRS) are calling on Australians to join peaceful Palm Sunday rallies around the country on 29 March in solidarity with refugees and people seeking asylum, and to demand an end to Australia's inhumane offshore processing and resettlement regime.

Palm Sunday, which always falls in Lent one week before Easter Sunday, marks the beginning of Holy Week and is a time of prayerful reflection and renewed commitment to justice, peace and mercy.

"In his 2026 Lent message, Pope Leo XIV urged us to 'recognise and respond to the cry of those anguished and suffering,' and to disarm our language, so that words of hatred 'give way to words of hope and peace'," said the Society's National President, Mark Gaetani.

"In that same spirit, the Society is inviting people of all backgrounds to come together in peaceful public witness to support those vulnerable people who seek safety on our shores," Mr Gaetani said.

"Seeking refuge is a tragedy, not a crime. On Palm Sunday, we remember that our nation is at its best when we welcome those in need with open hands and open hearts."

The Society is one of at least nine Catholic submissions to the Senate Inquiry into offshore processing and resettlement arrangements, led by the [Catholic Alliance for People Seeking Asylum \(CAPSA\)](#). JRS Australia is one of

these organisations, whose mission is to serve, accompany and advocate for refugees and people seeking asylum in Western Sydney.

JRS Australia's [submission](#) highlights the fate of those evacuated to Australia, who remain without hope of safe, permanent settlement and require ongoing support from refugee support organisations and charities.

The Society and JRS Australia encourage Australians to participate in Palm Sunday rallies across the country; visit www.commongrace.org.au/palm_sunday_2026 to find a rally near you.

“At the beginning of Holy Week, Christians are reminded on Palm Sunday that God accompanies humanity in vulnerability and suffering. Through these Palm Sunday rallies, Christians can demonstrate how they, in turn, stand in solidarity with those who suffer today,” said JRS Australia Country Director Fr Brett O’Neill, SJ.

For people seeking safety who have endured years of uncertainty, detention and separation from family, the human cost is profound. We stand with them, and we call on the Australian community to do the same, by joining us at Palm Sunday rallies across the country.”

Read the Society’s submission to the Offshore Processing Inquiry here: www.vinnies.org.au/national-council/articles/submission-into-offshore-processing

and JRS Australia’s submission (No 29) here: www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Committees/Senate/Legal_and_Constitutional_Affairs/Offshoreprocessing2025/Submissions

** Photo of National President, Mr Mark Gaetani, is available on request.*

The St Vincent de Paul Society in Australia consists of 45,000 members and volunteers who operate on the ground through over 1,000 groups located in local communities across the country.

MEDIA CONTACTS

St Vincent de Paul Society National Council: 0475 068 209 or media@svdp.org.au

Jesuit Refugee Service Australia: Molly Jackson – communications@jrs.org.au