

'Welcome' News

September 2015

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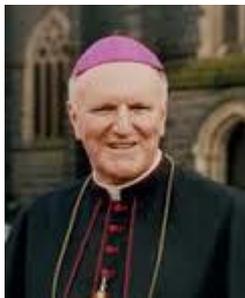
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Responding as a nation and at parish level to the needs of asylum seekers

The Archbishop of Melbourne, Denis Hart, has written to all Melburnians in response to the global crisis around refugees and asylum seekers.



The Archbishop welcomes news of the Australian government's additional intake of 12,000 refugees from Syria,

Archbishop Hart says, 'as Social Justice Sunday approaches, on Sunday 27 September, we are all called to reflect on the challenge to humanity of the current waves of asylum seekers across the globe.'

The Archbishop acknowledges that many parishes in Melbourne are already responding to the needs of asylum seekers through the provision of accommodation, material and financial support, social engagement and literacy programs, etc. He commends their work, along with that of Catholic organisations including the St Vincent de Paul Society, CatholicCare, the Brigidine Asylum Seeker Project and others. He echoes the appeal of the Holy Father earlier this month for parishes and religious communities to welcome a family of refugees as a concrete way of responding to immediate human need and encouraging a bold response by the state.

Read the complete text of the Archbishop's statement [here](#).

Strengthening Parish Support for Asylum Seekers - Next Forum: Wednesday 14th October

Join us for our next Forum on 14 October, and encourage your friends and fellow parishioners to attend.

We can deepen our awareness and strengthen support for the plight of asylum seekers here and overseas. The focus will be on Action and Advocacy, the Christian mission and the role of parishes in responding to Asylum Seeker needs. It will include a Parish Expo and a series of workshops. Keynote speakers include Sr. Brigid Arthur, Brigidine Asylum Seeker Project and Phil Glendenning, Director, Edmund Rice Centre and President, Refugee Council of Australia.

Bookings can be made at: <http://www.trybooking.com/IDSR>. For enquiries contact Lucia Brick: Telephone: 9287 5566 Email: lucia.brick@css.org.au

As part of Catholic Social Services Victoria, the 'Welcome the Asylum Seeker Parish Support Program' supports Catholic parishes to reach out to asylum seekers and refugees.

We work with parishes, agencies and individuals to raise awareness and advocate for more humane asylum seeker policies.

We are inspired by the Gospel message "I was a stranger and you welcomed me" (Matthew 25:35) and by Pope Francis' vision for parishes: "a community of communities, a sanctuary where the thirsty come to drink in the midst of their journey, and a centre of constant missionary outreach" (The Joy of the Gospel, 28).

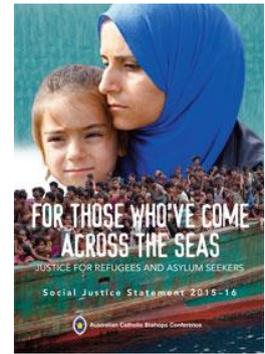
Please follow the Welcome the Asylum Seeker Parish Support Program on [Facebook](#)

September 2015 Newsletter

Social Justice Sunday, September 27th

Social Justice Sunday this year will be dedicated to the plight and rights of all asylum seekers and refugees. It is fitting that the Australian Bishops' Social Justice Statement mark this day is introduced by Bishop Vincent Long DD, Chairman, Australian Catholic Social Justice Council, a former refugee and boat person.

Archbishop Hart's letter (see above) states: " As the Social Justice statement from the Australian Bishops makes clear, off-shore and mandatory detention fall far short of our obligations as a responsible global citizen and a compassionate society; and many asylum seekers in the community are burdened by a lack of employment rights, and a lack of resources. Many parishes are already engaged with these issues and the Bishops' Statement provides a very good basis for further action".



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Copies of the Statement and resource materials will be available in parishes for Social Justice Sunday, and are available on-line [here](#).

Practical Assistance

Accommodation

Many parishes are already providing accommodation directly, either through the provision of a dwelling, or providing funds to cover, or assist with rental costs. There is a continuing need for accommodation.

Is your parish able to help?



Around the Parishes

Many Catholic parishes are already active in welcoming and supporting asylum seekers. If you would like your parish and your activities to feature in this section in a future edition please email Adrian Foley, at adrian.foley@css.org.au.

Our Lady Help of Christians, Eltham

Our Lady Help of Christians, Eltham has had an arrangement with Lentara Uniting Care (previously Hotham Mission) whereby they make a property available for people seeking asylum. Over the past ten years they have welcomed a Sri Lankan woman and her daughter, a Sri Lanka couple and an Egyptian couple. The house is within a two minute walk from the Church which has facilitated easy contact between them and parishioners. The property was recently sold and the parish intends to continue the arrangement with Lentara by using the interest from the sale of the house to pay rent for the couple to live nearby. (Fr Kevin F. Burke, Parish Priest)

The Way of the West, St Mary's, Williamstown

St Mary's Parish Williamstown recently launched 'The Way of the West' to welcome refugees and asylum seekers. During August the parish worked with the Asylum Seeker Resource Centre (ASRC) to collect food and material support for asylum seekers. St Mary's students helped with the collection of goods for the ASRC Truck, they spoke at Masses regarding the project, and welcomed diners to the **Celebration Lunch**.

The first phase of the project culminated on Migrant and Refugee Sunday, 30th August 2015, with the Celebration Lunch, prepared by and shared with detainees of the Broadmeadows Detention Centre. About 100 parishioners and friends attended. They were brightly welcomed by St Mary's Year 6 students. They were then served lunch by the detainees who spoke with guests and discussed their hopes for the future.

The detainees' visit was arranged by Mark Northeast, Chair of the Parish Council and Brad Coath, Community Worker with Urban Neighbours of Hope (email: brad@unoh.org). Receipts from the lunch were donated to a group supporting the detainees. Parish Priest Fr Greg Trythall, members of the Parish Council, parishioners, staff and students of St Mary's Primary School have all worked together to make the program a success. More information on the project can be found [here](#).

The Power of Pictures



Asylum Seeker News

Syrian refugee resettlement

Following the recent welcome news that the Australian Government will welcome an additional 12,000 refugees from the Syrian conflict, discussions have commenced between the federal government, state governments, organisations and church leaders about how to extend permanent settlement to the refugees.

The composition of people granted permanent visas is still being determined, but media reports suggest that this is likely to preference families, particularly vulnerable women and children. It is anticipated that the first people will be settled by December 2015.

There will be a need to develop comprehensive support arrangements to accommodate, provide settlement services and community and parish support for the new refugees. The support of Catholic agencies and parishes is likely to be significant to the success of the overall reception arrangements.

As stated in Archbishop Hart's letter (see above):

"Our various agencies have been working together to coordinate support for parishes, through the Asylum Seeker Support Program at Catholic Social Services Victoria. One way for parishes to make a start is to contact the Program at www.css.org.au, or tel: 9287 5566.

The additional Syrian refugees, expected to arrive in early 2016, will require much assistance, which will be the subject of future communication. In the meantime, the needs of those currently in our community remain pressing. In addition, prayer, discernment and work that parishes now undertake will leave us all better prepared to respond as demands on the community increase".

As further information becomes available we will include it on our website, in our newsletter and at parish forums.

Advocacy

Benenson Society Campaign for Asylum Seekers in Nauru

The Benenson Society encourages people to uphold the human rights of those suffering violations of their rights and by lobbying governments on behalf of prisoners of conscience, for the end of torture and the death penalty, and asserting the rights of all to basic freedoms.

The Society's current campaign focusses on the asylum seekers on Nauru. The Society believes 'there is no excuse for placing children in danger in detention centres or of leaving women vulnerable to sexual abuse, or in generally debasing the humanity of the asylum seekers. Yet this is precisely what is happening in Nauru and Manus Island where Australia has established detention centres off shore in small neighbouring countries.' They ask that 'If you are an Australian member of Benenson, please consider contacting your local Member of Parliament or the Minister for Immigration to call for humane treatment of asylum seekers, irrespective of the merits or not of any policy to stop people smuggling.'

Call for Volunteers

Would you like to join our central team?

We need help with:-



Monitoring what is happening with refugee and asylum seeker issues



Maintaining relationships with people and parishes



Professional writing for the Newsletter, the Web Page and other articles

If you have skills in these areas, or for further information, please contact program leader Adrian Foley, at adrian.foley@css.org.au

A prayer for Asylum Seekers

We pray for refugees, with particular attention to unaccompanied minors:

Who are forced to escape violence, war and persecution in the hopes of finding a safe home and brighter future. That we may become ever more aware of their plight and do all within our power to bring shed light and truth of their situation to our wider society. We pray to the Lord:

We pray for all migrants, and the families of migrants left behind:

Who, through the years, have graced Australia with the gifts of their lives, culture, work and their faith. May we be attentive to the needs of migrants in our communities and become witnesses to the Gospel of Christ. We pray to the Lord:

For those who provided care and safety to migrants in our community:

May they be strengthened by the promise of the Gospel, that whatever they do the least is done to Jesus Christ himself. We pray to the Lord.

(Adapted from the Prayers of the Faithful for Migrant and Refugee Sunday 2015)

To subscribe to our newsletter or to respond to anything in this Newsletter, or for further information, please contact program leader Adrian Foley, at adrian.foley@css.org.au



“Fan into flame the gift of God that is within you” (2 Tim 1:6)