

2019 annual report



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Board members

Sr Annette Cunliffe RSC

Catherine Verschuer

Elizabeth Biok

Dr Eve Lester

Fr Gregory Jacobs SJ

Staff and Volunteers

Alma Gatica - Philanthropy and Development Coordinator (from February 2019)

Amelia Savage - Community Development Coordinator (from August 2019)

Anjali Roberts - Housing Project Coordinator (from November 2019)

Anne Nesbitt - Project Officer - Refugees and People Seeking Asylum

Anne Porter (volunteer) - Volunteer Coordinator

Anne Rutherford - Communications and Community Organising Coordinator

Carolina Gottardo - Director

Dimitra Papavassiliou - Finding Safety Coordinator

Janelle Massih - Caseworker (until April 2019)

Joanna Brooke - Community Development Coordinator (until June 2019)

Katie Spiroski - Casework Manager

Kim Mandelik - Office Manager

Kim Smith - Caseworker (on maternity leave)

Leonie Dyer - Employment Project Coordinator

Maeve Brown - Direct Services Manager

Sr Margaret Guy RSC - Volunteer Coordinator (until December 2019)

Martina Thiermann - Caseworker (from May 2019)

Nicole Ascaino - Caseworker

Nishadh Rego - Policy and Advocacy Coordinator

Sarah Brown - Finding Safety Project Officer

Shaheen Whyte - Caseworker (from May 2019)

Shatha Jajo - Information and Referral Officer, Finding Safety (from April 2019)

Stephanie Beckwith - Caseworker & Finding Safety Coordinator (until July 2019)

Susana Gale - Accountant



Our caseworkers are a core part of JRS Australia's work. Collectively, the JRS team fulfill the JRS mission of accompaniment and service as well as advocating for policies of dignity and protection for people seeking asylum, refugees and migrants in vulnerable situations.



Once more 2019 saw punitive Government policies towards people seeking asylum, refugees and other forcibly displaced persons continue and even intensify. Many of these people experience severe anxiety that exacerbates the effect of trauma suffered in their home countries

and en route to Australia. Their needs are complex and continue to challenge JRS Australia and our limited resources.

In spite of this JRS Australia has provided wonderful service, accompaniment and advocacy, in fulfilment of our mission. For this we must give thanks to the committed staff, volunteers, donors, partners and board members and to those other agencies with whom we partner. Other initiatives depended on the generosity of many individuals and groups who share our goals and offer support in many different ways.

Some significant partnerships include the *Sydney Alliance* of significant Church and non-religious groups and the *NSW Humanitarian Hub*, an alliance of four groups who support refugees and asylum seekers and collaborate in educating volunteers effectively.

JRS also continues its close association with the Diocese of Parramatta and its strategy of "Walking with Refugees and People Seeking Protection" and has also developed a valuable partnership with the Justice and Peace Office at the Archdiocese of Sydney.

A number of Religious Congregations have continued to partner with JRS, encouraging their members to use their skills and time in service of our clients.

A number of schools and parishes have also shared in this important ministry, providing direct service, contributing goods for our Foodbank or offering personal and financial support.

Our Advocacy is rooted in our experiences of accompanying and serving these people and this report details some wonderful examples of advocacy, usually in partnership with others. JRS Australia has enabled presentations in parishes and schools as well as at Conferences, seeking to enable voices of those with lived experience as refugees more opportunities to share these experiences.

Fundraising was a focus in 2019 and we had success with a number of significant grants, while many individuals and Foundations also contributed important resources. The *Finding Safety* program flourished at *Arrupé Place*, the house provided by the Sisters of Mercy Parramatta. The new premises at Westmead, owned by Parramatta Diocese and formerly occupied by the Marist Brothers, allowed us to continue to expand the offerings available to meet the varied needs of our clients. We are privileged to have Bishop Long make a personal visit there.

The Board seeks to support the work of the wonderful staff and volunteers and the annual Christmas function, hosted by the Diocese of Parramatta, provided an opportunity in 2019 to meet many staff, volunteers, partner groups and clients in the Cathedral Hall at Parramatta.

I am once more privileged to offer sincere thanks, on behalf of all at JRS Australia, to each person and group supporting us. Without your support JRS could not continue to carry out its mission to accompany, serve and advocate for those who are so sadly marginalised in our community. Remembering Jesus' promise that whatever we do for those in need we do for Him, I am sure that you, our supporters, volunteers and staff will be richly rewarded.

Annette Cunliffe RSC
Chair of the Board, JRS Australia

4 director's address



I am writing this address in 2020 and it is very hard to think about the year 2019 from the Coronavirus era where so many of the people we serve have been disproportionately affected by the pandemic. Many have lost their jobs and are struggling to get food on the table, buy essential medicines and avoid homelessness. The people we serve are not entitled to any Government support and the situation is generating a humanitarian crisis.

The year 2019 was not easy either with so many Government policies directly affecting people seeking asylum and other forcibly displaced people that were finding it nearly impossible to qualify for the Status Resolution Support Service (SRSS) or any other government support and that were affected by a policy of forced destitution. So many people were already struggling or at risk of homelessness and with very little to make ends meet. Nonetheless, some had jobs in the casual sector that our Empowered to Work (ETW) program had helped them to secure and maintain (*more on ETW on p.11*). Many of those jobs are now gone.

Despite the fact that 2019 presented many challenges, it now seems far away. Alongside a punitive government policy, 2019 also showed us once again the incredible resilience and agency of the people that we serve that continue being a source of inspiration to staff and volunteers.

Our accompaniment and services work continued at JRS' centres in Westmead and Parramatta and we were honoured to directly support 3,723 women, children and men this year. We continued offering specialist casework support, emergency relief, employment support, English classes, residential accommodation, hosting legal surgeries, up-scaling our foodbank, and providing a whole array of community activities including cooking together, yoga, homework club, youth club, community gardening and many others.

JRS' Women's Space also flourished in Parramatta through our Finding Safety program with primary prevention activities, workshops, self-advocacy and key referrals for refugee and asylum seeking women survivors or at risk of sexual and gender based violence.

One of the main characteristics of JRS' work in 2019 was enhancing and consolidating our approach to accompaniment, service and advocacy by focusing on the leadership and agency of the people that we

serve. There is still a long way to go and we will continue traveling this path.

In 2019, like in previous years, JRS favoured an approach to work based on developing and maintaining constructive partnerships with so many organisations, networks, services, religious congregations and supporters. This included strong partnerships with the Justice and Peace Office of the Archdiocese of Sydney and the Diocese of Parramatta and with many other lay organisations. We are very grateful to our friends and partners that make our work possible and that we very much enjoy working with.

Policy and advocacy work have also been a highlight of 2019 with the further development of our parliamentary engagement work, the development of a very successful community organising program and targeted advocacy and connections between our activities at national, regional and international levels. JRS' advocacy is informed by our experiences on the ground. We also continue enhancing and developing JRS' work with schools.

Through the Catholic Alliance for People Seeking Asylum (CAPSA), that we co-lead, JRS was also active advocating for the people that are still stranded in Nauru and Papua New Guinea pushing for safe pathways for all and the closure of the Bomana Immigration Centre in Port Moresby that was finally achieved.

At the end of the year, I was part of a group of Catholic leaders visiting Port Moresby and was honoured to meet many people affected by extremely inhumane policies. We will continue advocating for safe and secure pathways for all in PNG and Nauru and also for people seeking asylum in the community in Australia including those that have been transferred from the islands.

I continue to be inspired and proud of JRS' staff and very committed volunteers that allow the organisation to punch well above its weight in terms of impact and reach. Sometimes it is hard to believe that JRS only has 20 part-time staff. A lot of our value added has to do with the commitment and dedication of each staff member and the invaluable contribution from our volunteers. I would also like to thank our skilled and supportive board for their vision and support.

Fundraising continues being a challenge and none of the work we do would be possible without the generous contribution of our donors and supporters. We are incredibly grateful to each of you. We also can assure you that your contribution goes a long way and makes a big difference to people's lives.

Carolina Gottardo
Director, JRS Australia

what JRS is doing to help refugees and people seeking asylum



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We work to uphold the rights of refugees and people who are in the process of seeking asylum and migrants in vulnerable situations so they can empower themselves and live meaningful and dignified lives in Australia.



We assist families through the asylum process, providing support and information as well as legal assistance through our partners.



We provide tailored employment assistance to refugees and people seeking asylum based on their individual needs and skills-sets via resume writing, job searching, interview preparation, referrals to English classes, training through TAFE and establishing relationships with potential employers.



We welcome people into our community centre providing a place of welcome and hospitality, running activities such as community lunches, women's health and pamper days, homework club and community gardening.



We lobby and promote the rights of forcibly displaced people, encouraging dignified treatment and fairer asylum and migration processes in Australia, the Asia Pacific region and around the world.



We run English classes and teach people the communication tools they need to empower themselves, to understand their rights and meet and form lasting relationships.



We help refugee families and families seeking asylum find accommodation and provide them with emergency relief payments, providing them with much needed support and safety.



We provide fresh food and essential items to the most vulnerable refugees and people seeking asylum in our community through our Foodbank program which operates like a supermarket so people are supported to choose items they need most, free of charge.

6 year at a glance

**February
2019**

- JRS' submission's to the National Inquiry into Sexual Harassment in Australian Workplaces (PDF) outlines the specific vulnerabilities of Asylum Seeker and Refugee Women (ASRW) to sexual harassment and violence in Australian workplaces.
- JRS participates in panels at the 2019 Refugee Alternatives Conference in Adelaide on the cuts to the Status Resolution Support Saervice (SRSS) and the sector's advocacy response and at an event organised by CAPSA, JRS co-organises community delegation to meet with Shadow Minister for Immigration and Border Protection in Western Sydney.

**March
2019**

- JRS partners with OneSight to run a free Eye Clinic for people seeking asylum, providing access to free eye checkups and free glasses for over 50 people.
- JRS hold its staff strategy days to build the next phase of its strategic plan

**April
2019**

- JRS addresses the Jesuit Conference of Asia Pacific (JCAP) Migration Network on the Global Compacts and their implications to the rights of migrants and refugees in the Asia-Pacific region.
- JRS joins other Jesuit social ministries for the Staff Spirituality Day at St Ignatius College, Adelaide. The day focussed on who we serve, what we do, and how our work is grounded in Ignatian values.
- A JRS contingent of parishioners, staff and volunteers march for justice for refugees on Palm Sunday.

**May
2019**

- JRS releases 'Strangers No More' Federal Election statement.
- JRS participates in Sydney Catholic Archdiocese Social Justice Forum Panel.
- JRS celebration of our JRS Volunteers for Volunteers Week

**June
2019**

- JRS receives funding from the City of Parramatta Council for a community garden project to be based in Westmead.
- JRS addresses 200 Sydney Catholic Schools staff at a city-wide forum, on the plight of people seeking asylum in Australia.

**July
2019**

- JRS addresses at Jesuit and Companion School Australia (JACSA) Education Conference.
- JRS and Jesuit Social Services sign an MOU to co-chair the Catholic Alliance for People Seeking Asylum (CAPSA).
- JRS presents at UNHCR Annual consultations in Geneva attended by 700 people on the issue of mixed movements.



**August
2019**

- JRS' Finding Safety Project hosts second sector capacity building training with 36 workers from the domestic and family violence, asylum, community and legal sectors.
- JRS' submission to the Senate Inquiry into the Repairing Medical Transfers Bill (Medevac) recommends that the Bill not be repealed.

**September
2019**

- JRS partners with Refugee Advice and Casework Service (RACS) to run Women at-Risk legal clinics from the Women's Space in Parramatta. The clinics focus on working with women whose asylum claims are based on or are impacted by sexual and gender-based violence.
- JRS hosts gender equality training at JRS International Office in Rome
- JRS co-organises training of leaders with lived experience of seeking asylum.

**October
2019**

- JRS joins Sydney Alliance partners in celebration of Australia-first pilot to provide affordable early childhood learning to children seeking asylum in Canterbury-Bankstown LGA.
- JRS' submission to the Joint Standing Committee Inquiry into Regional Migration calls on the government to support SHEV-holders more effectively to move and reside in regional areas.
- JRS attends and presents at JRS Regional meeting in Thailand.

**November
2019**

- JRS joins a delegation of Australian Catholic leaders, including Bishop Vincent Long, to visit refugees and people seeking asylum in Papua New Guinea (PNG)
- JRS participates in national delegation to Parliament in Canberra
- JRS presents at the first national conference on LGBTIQ refugees in Australia at ANU
- JRS' Volunteer Coordinator, Sr Margaret Guy RSC celebrates her final year with JRS. JRS celebrates the contribution of all of our volunteers. Persian artist Hadiyah (and JRS client) gives a special painting to Sr Margaret.

**December
2019**

- JRS and the Justice and Peace Office (JPO) of the Catholic Archdiocese of Sydney co-host a public forum on refugees in Papua New Guinea (PNG) on the same day that the Medevac Bill was repealed.
- JRS co-hosts Power and Agency in Limbo: the first ever round table on women seeking asylum in Australia
- JRS co-hosts with the Red Cross an annual Christmas party at Parramatta Cathedral attended by over 170 clients, volunteers and supporters.
- JRS participates in the world's first ever Global Refugee Forum (GRF) in Geneva and presents at the first anniversary meeting of the UN Network on Migration.

8 a year of achievement



3723 people seeking asylum,* refugees and migrants in vulnerable situations served



279 single adults and family groups supported with emergency financial assistance



172 people assisted with work readiness and employment support through JRS and HOW Empowered to Work program



Over **300** women supported through the JRS Women's Space and the WomenNSW funded Finding Safety Project.



26 families (including 44 adults and 54 children) and **7** single men assisted with accommodation support



1381 people received legal advice through the 90 legal clinics run in Westmead and Parramatta in partnership with Refugee Advice and Casework Service (RACS)



1036 Opal Card concession applications completed, giving people seeking asylum access to discounted public transport



117 English classes for 1:1 sessions, in addition to 32 Play with English sessions, held



Over **1350** people had access to fresh food and essential items through our foodbank over the course of the year, with over 330 receiving support each month



Over **94** 'Cooking Together' meals shared



114 dedicated volunteers donated their time in 2019 to ensure our work continued

**People seeking asylum includes single women and men, couples and families with children*

Policy development and analysis

- JRS presented at 34 conferences, roundtables, and policy forums at national, regional and international levels.
- JRS published 2 journal articles, 4 op-eds, 1 policy report, 4 policy submissions, and 3 issue briefs.
- JRS staff are active in 38 policy/advocacy networks at local, national, regional and global levels.

Advocacy and Communications:

- JRS led or participated in 43 meetings with federal, state and local government decision-makers.
- JRS advocacy, campaigns and service work received 29 media mentions.

Community Engagement:

- JRS reached 2143 students around the country through its Refugee Voices program.
- JRS organised 14 Community Conversations reaching 918 people.



Casework & Emergency Relief

In 2019, JRS continued to provide casework and emergency relief support to people who have no access to social security payments or the Status Resolution Support Service (SRSS). During 2019 JRS saw the slow compounding of waiting, uncertainty, rejection, destitution, a loss of hope and the deterioration of peoples' physical and mental health from policies prompting forced destitution.

Unfortunately, this is not unexpected or surprising, but while many in the sector were expecting a sudden rise in the need for support in 2018 (when the SRSS cuts first went into effect), we instead witnessed the layered impacts of people running out of all savings, resources and community support, whilst being unable to leave the country during 2019.

People are forced to survive for an indefinite period, often a number of years, without the resources required to adequately support themselves. This is compounded by changes to eligibility for SRSS so that even clients who were previously thought of as 'low needs' are experiencing higher rates of destitution, and poorer mental health, thus requiring more intensive support.

JRS prioritises peoples' needs over their legal status or place in the Refugee Status Determination (RSD) process. JRS works with people who are submitting primary applications, waiting for tribunal hearings, seeking judicial review of decisions on their claims, or awaiting ministerial intervention.

JRS is also trying to meet the needs of an increasing number of people arriving by plane who are unable to work or access SRSS while they remain on their substantive visas for months. We have never had enough resources to meet the needs of everyone who comes through the door, but with fewer funds available, immovably strict SRSS criteria, and a growing number of people waiting years for judicial review hearings or ministerial intervention, this inability to meet presenting needs is being felt more acutely by the people we serve and by the staff and volunteers.

JRS also continues to support and accompany people who have recently been released from immigration detention, people in community detention, and individuals and families released onto Bridging Visas (BVs) who were medically transferred from Nauru and PNG. Many are still waiting on the outcome of applications to resettle in the U.S. Others are ineligible or have not engaged in the process. All have been waiting over seven years now for safety and protection and a place to call home.

10 our works

Community Development

In 2019, developing a community of welcome and belonging remained a key priority. JRS provided many opportunities for people seeking asylum, refugees and migrants in vulnerable situations to take on leadership roles and showcase their skills and talents through our programs such as Cooking Together, Play with English, the Community Garden, The Homework Club, the Men's Group (run in partnership with the House of Welcome) and many holidays, festivals and social events.

One of the success-stories of 2019 has been the establishment of the JRS Community Garden. Thanks to a grant from the City of Parramatta Council, JRS employed a gardener to help coordinate and maintain the garden, as well as to pass on skills and draw upon the strengths and knowledge of our clients and the community in helping in the garden each week. We now have five committed weekly gardeners and between 30-50 people who have attended gardening working bees, and picnics.

Many others prefer to use the garden as a place for finding peace and quiet. People can stroll through the garden, picking fruit or flowers. Fruit, vegetables and herbs grown in the garden are used by our community cooks and given out to refugees and people seeking asylum directly through the JRS Foodbank program.

Foundations Housing Project

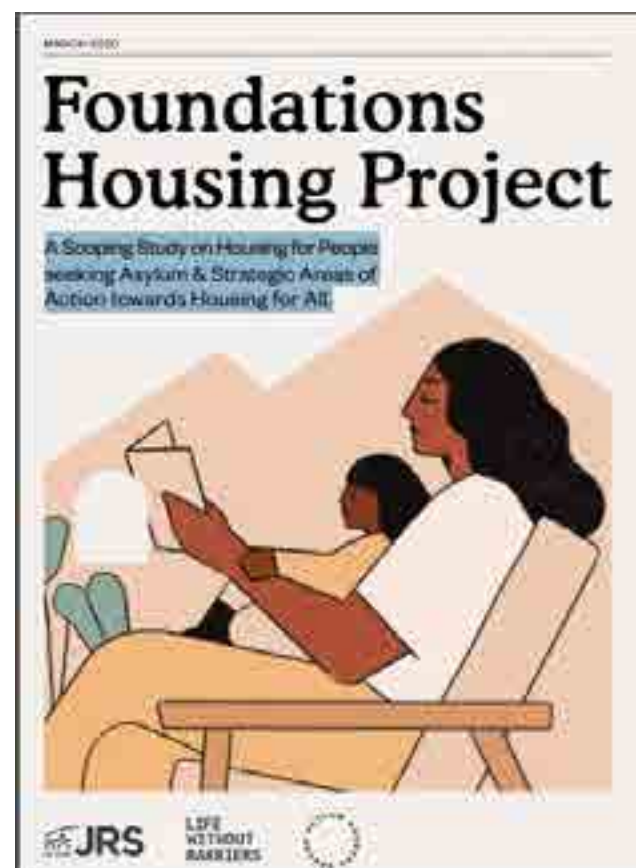
Finding housing in a crisis and longer-term safe and stable accommodation is a key priority for JRS' clients. In 2019, JRS, Life Without Barriers, and the Asylum Seekers Centre Came together for a scoping project to examine the barriers to housing for people seeking asylum, most of whom have the right to work, but do not necessarily have work or a secure home. Australian Red Cross (ARC), House of Welcome (HoW) and Vinnies NSW (SVDP) have also contributed significantly to this project.

The housing project broadly reviewed housing supply, access to private, subsidised and crisis accommodation, people's capacity to look for and maintain housing, an estimate of organisational spending on crisis housing and contributions to those presenting with an immediate need for housing support. The project sought to have an impact in this last area –

to increase the number of vulnerable people housed in a safe and comfortable place by exploring alternative options to direct financial support for women seeking asylum who are escaping violence; and for relatively less vulnerable clients who are mentally and physically well and who have the capacity to work and could find accommodation through work exchange or home sharing platforms.

JRS and the project partners acknowledge that the housing options for people seeking asylum are extremely limited, as are the resources available to the organisations working to support people while they are seeking protection. The options explored by the project are thus set in the context of a sector that is still striving for structural and policy change, but that is also informed by the need for immediate options for the growing number of people that non-for profits are unable to assist.

In 2020, the Foundations Housing Project will continue to work with the asylum, DV, and homelessness sectors to look at pathways and platforms that could increase access to housing for people seeking asylum. A report will also be available by early May, 2020 on the JRS Australia website.



Empowered to work



Idrissa Dumbuya (centre) says JRS' employment services allowed him to secure a job (more on Idrissa on page 16).

Empowered to Work (ETW) is an employment program offered by JRS Australia and the House of Welcome. Through ETW, refugees and people seeking asylum find pathways to employment. With the aid of 15 volunteers across two sites, ETW gives practical support in the form of tax file numbers, resumes and cover letters, advice and guidance on working in Australia and tips for interviews. Once people are deemed 'work ready,' they begin the job hunt. This is where the hard work begins.

Even with perfected resumes, up-to-date certificates and work experience, the majority of people do not even receive an email of acknowledgement of their application. This is the result of the multiple barriers to employment experienced by the people we serve including short term visas, language barriers, lack of local experience, unrecognised qualifications, difficulties in navigating the system and referrals of the hardest cases to secure jobs.

Working with people who face barriers to accessing the job market and whose hopes are continually dashed, led us to investigate alternative means to employment. In 2019, ETW connected with social enterprises in Sydney. People selected for a placement period

earned an income, made connections and gained qualifications as well as Australian work experience. Clients worked in cafe placements, took on traineeships and paid-internships with financial institutions and found opportunities in art, design as well as in warehouses.

ETW strived to be flexible and moved to a more individualised system of pairing clients with the best volunteer to pass on the knowledge/skills needed by the client. English-for-the-workplace classes began at the JRS drop-in centre at Westmead and networks with potential employers were established.

In 2019, ETW engaged with 172 people seeking asylum, including 68 who have gone on to find casual or part-time employment and over 100 who have remained engaged in employment support workshops, English classes, or further education and training.

As we reflect on the success of 2019, it is now 2020. Many people assisted by ETW have lost their jobs due to COVID-19. At the time of writing, these people are without any government support so are returning to JRS for help. JRS remains committed to finding people seeking asylum, refugees and migrants in vulnerable situations pathways to dignified employment.

12 our works

Finding Safety

The JRS Finding Safety program serves women, seeking asylum, refugee women and migrants in vulnerable situations experiencing, or at risk of, Sexual or Gender-Based Violence S/GBV.

In 2019, JRS served over 300 women and girls at the JRS Women's Space in Parramatta. The key objectives of this space are to build/rebuild social networks, provide psycho-social support, gain leadership skills, facilitate self-empowerment as well as provide safe, person-centred and non-stigmatising S/GBV wrap around services. Women also receive information and referrals on issues relating to women's rights, health, and services.

In 2019, JRS held many events with various speakers on women's rights, domestic/family violence education as well as workshops. Through JRS, Hazara community leader Hava Rezaie (pictured below) raised women's awareness on work and housing rights. JRS worked alongside women leaders with lived experience to develop their leadership skills. Our monthly Peer Support Group fostered support amongst the participating women. With Refugee Advice and Casework Service (RACS), JRS also established a women at-risk legal clinic in Parramatta to serve over 100 women and girls.

A key achievement has been bridging the gap between the domestic violence and refugee/asylum seeker sectors. In 2019, JRS co-developed and co-delivered



Community leader, Sajeeda Bahadurmia outlines the multifaceted challenges of women seeking asylum. Through JRS' Finding Safety Project, the issues facing refugee women and women seeking asylum were brought to the forefront at the first roundtable with women seeking asylum in Australia.

(with technical experts) two sector training sessions with 75 attendees.

In December 2019, JRS Australia's Finding Safety Project partnered with Settlement Services International (SSI) and ACCESS QLD to hold Australia's first-ever round table with women seeking asylum with over 40 attendees. *Power and Agency in Limbo* highlighted the issues and needs of women and girls seeking asylum, and also elaborated on how different stakeholders can meaningfully engage with affected populations at a local and national level to support their self-reliance.

On a national level, JRS is active in the National Advocacy Group for women on temporary visas experiencing violence. JRS works alongside State and Federal representatives, women-led associations and organisations to protect the rights and safety of women and their children experiencing S/GBV, including developing a key blueprint for reform.



Leaders with lived experience of seeking asylum and JRS Australia's Director, Carolina Gottardo (third from right) and JRS Policy and Advocacy Coordinator, Nishadh Rego (second from left) come to meet with MPs, Michelle Rowland (centre) and Shayne Neumann (fourth from right); along with parishioners and Uniting.

Overview

2019 was yet another busy and challenging year for JRS Australia's advocacy, policy development, and campaigning work.

People seeking asylum and refugees on temporary visas, living in the Australian community and offshore, continued to be deprived of their basic rights, including employment, education, adequate healthcare, and mobility.

In 2019, in order to effectively raise these concerns, JRS Australia consolidated relationships with key decision-makers. JRS Australia organized or participated in 43 meetings with federal, state, and local government politicians on a cross party basis, including the Office of the Prime Minister, the Minister for Immigration, Citizenship and Multicultural Affairs David Coleman MP, the office of the Opposition Leader, Anthony Albanese MP, and the Shadow Minister for Home Affairs, Senator Kristina Keneally.

In these meetings, we highlighted a wide range of concerns including the imprisonment of innocent men in Bomana Immigration Detention Centre (IDC), Port Moresby (PNG); the continued homelessness and destitution of women, children, and men seeking asylum in Australia; and the challenges of gendered violence for asylum-seeking, refugee, and migrant women. Significantly, leaders with lived experience, Catholic clergy and parishioners attended more than half of these meetings.

JRS Australia contributed to policy debates on immigration and asylum issues at local, national, regional (Asia Pacific) and global levels.

JRS Australia drafted an election statement, produced policy submissions, and gave evidence at a number of

national policy inquiries, including the *Senate Inquiry into the Migration Amendment (Repairing Medical Transfers) Bill 2019*; the *Joint Standing Committee on Migration Inquiry into Migration in Regional Australia 2019*; and the *National Inquiry into Sexual Harassment in the Workplace 2019*.

JRS Australia updated and disseminated three policy briefs across our membership; and provided vital policy perspectives to decision makers at different levels and key media outlets – including SBS, the Saturday Paper, Guardian Australia, CathNews, Catholic Outlook, and the Catholic Weekly – on 29 occasions.

Finally, JRS Australia expanded our engagement with schools, parishes, and a range of other community groups, engaging thousands of people in the process.

As a result of JRS Australia's pilot community organizing program, parishioners and school students met their local MPs or Senators on more than ten occasions and many now provide practical support to refugees and people seeking asylum in Sydney.

Advocating for the closure of Bomana Immigration Detention Centre and the end to offshore detention

In November 2019, a group of seven Australia Catholic leaders, including Carolina Gottardo, JRS Australia Director and Co-facilitator of CAPSA; Bishop Vincent Long, of Australian Catholic Bishops Conference Commission for Social Justice – Mission and Service; and Fr. Peter Smith, Justice and Peace Promoter of the Catholic Archdiocese of Sydney travelled to Port Moresby at the invitation of Fr. Giorgio Licini, General Secretary of the PNG Catholic Bishops Conference.

There they visited the many men in various states of

14 advocacy



Fr Tom McDonough, Fr Peter Smith, Behrouz Boochani, The Most Reverend Bishop Vincent Long and Carolina Gottardo.

ill-health and destitution in hospitals, and hotel rooms in Port Moresby. The delegation also learned of the approximately fifty men locked up in Bomana IDC without access to adequate food, showers, visitors, and family members without charge or a clear end date for release and in conditions the men described as torture.

Upon return, JRS and the Catholic Alliance for People Seeking Asylum (CAPSA), (which JRS now co-chairs with Jesuit Social Services), joined a growing chorus of secular and faith-based civil society organisations to campaign for the end of offshore detention of people in Australia's care and coordinated a private letter to government decision-makers calling for the urgent release of the men, the closure of Bomana and safe pathways for all those in PNG and Nauru.

JRS and the Justice and Peace Office (JPO) of the Archdiocese of Sydney led a Catholic delegation to parliament house in order to raise the issue there. Amidst significant media coverage, the JRS Australia and Archdiocese co-hosted a public event to highlight the injustice. Close to 300 Catholics (in person and virtually) participated in the event and expressed a commitment to be a part of a growing Catholic campaign to seek justice for refugees, people seeking asylum and migrants in vulnerable situations.

In mid-December the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference (ACBC) also released a pre-Christmas statement calling for the end of Australia's offshore detention regime.

In early January 2020, Bomana Immigration Detention Centre was closed and all of the men were released

into the community or brought to Australia for medical treatment.

Safety and support: People seeking asylum in the Australian community

Before the Federal Election, JRS Australia produced *Strangers No More*, a detailed analysis and call to action on six key issues pertaining to forced migration in Australia and the Asia-Pacific that was then given to all of Australia's new parliamentarians.

In the aftermath of the Federal Election, JRS Australia worked closely with the Refugee Council of Australia (RCOA), and other sector partners to respond to the increasingly dire circumstances of refugees and people seeking asylum in Sydney.

After listening to those affected; conducting research on policy solutions; and meeting with decision-makers in Canberra on two occasions, the National Fair Process Working Group, a collective of civil society organisations and academics, continued to focus on ensuring a safety net for all asylum seekers without alternative sources of income and finding alternative pathways to permanent protection for people in the community.

At the local level, JRS Australia participated in an Australia-first pilot to provide affordable early childhood learning opportunities to children seeking asylum in Canterbury-Bankstown LGA. The scheme, spearheaded by Sydney Alliance and Mayor Khal Ashfour precipitated an agreement between the Justice and Peace Office (JPO) of the Catholic Archdiocese, Sydney Catholic

Early Childhood Services (SCECS), and JRS Australia to afford additional places to children seeking asylum in early childhood learning centres.

JRS Australia advocacy at a regional and global levels

In 2019 JRS remained active at regional and international levels. In Asia Pacific, JRS worked closely with the JRS Regional Office and other JRS country offices, attending the biennial JRS' regional meeting in Thailand. JRS also presented at the Migration Network of the Jesuit Asia Pacific Conference (JCAP) in Seoul in April 2019 on the global compacts and how to use the new these new global tools for effective advocacy at the regional and national levels.

JRS continued joint work with Asia Pacific Refugee Rights Network (APRRN) and presented at APRRN's Regional Protection Forum - Towards a 'whole of society approach' in the implementation of the Global Compacts in September 2019. JRS also shared our experiences with initiatives to shift hearts and minds at the community level at a roundtable organised by the Office of the High Commissioner on Human Rights (OHCHR) on narratives of migration.

At the international level, JRS participated in various forums and platforms, presenting at the first year anniversary of the UN Migration Network, UNCHR's NGO consultations, the Human Rights Council and a symposium organised by the Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Migrants amongst others, focusing on the issues of mixed movements, pathways and gender equality.

We also raised the importance of safe and secure pathways for the people still in PNG and Nauru with key international decision makers. In December 2019, JRS attended the first ever Global Refugee Forum (GRN), a major milestone on the implementation of the Global Compact on Refugees.

Catholics stand with Refugees

Parishes. In 2019, JRS worked with 31 Sydney parishes to promote the dignified living of refugees, people seeking asylum and migrants in vulnerable situations. This took the form of awareness raising and material and advocacy-based support. Special thanks to the Justice and Peace Office at the Sydney Archdiocese for helping to foster a more organised Catholic response of welcome. With the generosity of the Planet Wheeler

Foundation, our JRS community organising with parishes continues into 2020.

Schools. In 2019, JRS continued to work with Jesuit, Catholic and independent schools to raise the issues faced by refugees and people seeking asylum. JRS continued to offer two schools programs, Refugee Voices (a speaking program run in partnership with RCOA) and Community Conversations (formerly 'Table Talks'). In 2019, 2143 students heard a speaker with lived experience share her/his story via the Refugee Voices program.

In 2019, JRS reached 918 people via its Community Conversations where refugees and people seeking asylum share their story. Small groups discuss the impact of the story and the solidarity actions they can take. Parishes and schools both can host Community Conversations. Special thanks to Sydney Alliance for co-facilitating Community Conversations with JRS Australia.

Other touching gestures came from various schools such as Sam Duggan, an inspiring year 6 student from St Aloysius College who gave up his Christmas gifts to donate to "JRS' Christmas Gifts Drive" after learning more about the situation, and meeting people seeking asylum and refugees served by JRS in Westmead.

The Bookends Project. The Provincial of the Society of Jesus in Australia, Fr Brian McCoy SJ refers to two 'Bookends of rejection' that mark Australian history, namely the treatment of Indigenous Australians and of forcibly displaced people. In 2019, JRS Australia continued working with the Jesuit Province Australia on 'the Bookends Project' to support people seeking asylum, refugees and First Nations people. In 2019, the Jesuit Youth Award was also relaunched and embraced by most Jesuit schools. Students designed persuasive multimedia projects about asylum seeker policy and the award was built into the curriculum of several Jesuit schools.



16 real life stories

Idrissa Dumbuya - teacher, journalist, human rights advocate

"I was born and educated in Sierra Leone and raised by a Christian mission. I commenced my career as a high school teacher and sports journalist. My most recent area of focus was as an activist, advocating against Female Genital Mutilation (FGM); a practice introducing young girls and women to diseases such as HIV/AIDS, hepatitis, to name a few.

FGM is widely practised and welcomed by all communities in Sierra Leone. People who speak against the practice risk their lives. At one protest, I was captured, beaten and tied with a rope to a car

"With such profound fear I was left with no option but to seek asylum when coming to Australia... With the JRS Casework service, I managed to recover and later with their employment services I secured a job."

and dragged along the street. Later, I was taken to the bush and tied to a tree with my hands upside-down. My group members, who were women, were forcefully mutilated one after the other by five strong women.

With the help of the Church, I was accredited to come to Australia in 2018 to cover the Commonwealth Games. With such profound fear I was left with no option but to seek asylum when coming to Australia. Fortunately I was granted a Bridging Visa.

It was very hard to adjust to a different culture. Later, I discovered that the people of Australia are very accommodating with the early intervention of JRS. JRS helped me with temporary accommodation and a weekly food voucher. All hope was lost for I nearly killed myself because of lots of anxiety and trauma. With the JRS casework service, I managed to recover and later with their employment services I secured a job.

With the help of the Australian government, I was subsidised to study Certificate IV in Disability (completed), and am currently doing my Diploma of Community Service and Case Management (ongoing) which I'm paying for myself. Also I engage in schools and community campaigns in my desire of telling people about refugees and asylum seekers in Australia."

Idrissa also continues to speak up for the rights of women and girls. Thanks for your courage, leadership, and time Idrissa.



In 2019, we were blessed to have the support of 114 dedicated volunteers and the continued commitment of our two hard working Volunteer Coordinators, Sr. Margaret Guy RSC and Anne Porter. Volunteers are essential to the reception and hospitality at Arrupe Place, the English classes, foodbank, and social support provided at the community centre, as well as to the coordination of the house meetings and maintenance of the Blaiket Shelter.

JRS has also continued to partner with the House of Welcome, the Asylum Seekers Centre and RACS as part of the NSW Humanitarian Hub to better support, coordinate and train volunteers.

This year JRS also celebrated the contributions of seven volunteers who have given over five years of service to JRS. These included English teachers, receptionists



Sr. Margaret Guy RSC

and accompaniment/hospitality volunteers who have been with JRS since the doors of Arrupe Place first opened in Parramatta in January 2015.

In late 2019, Sr. Margaret Guy RSC, our long serving Volunteer Coordinator concluded her ministry with JRS. As Maeve Brown, JRS' Direct Services Manager noted in a recent reflection, "[since Margaret joined JRS] things have only gotten worse for people seeking asylum, but it has been an honour to work alongside Margaret. Even on difficult days, Margaret shows deep compassion and solidarity with those that walk through our door. We will all miss her greatly."



Anne Porter



18 acknowledgements

JRS Australia relies on many wonderful people to function effectively.

Our dedicated JRS staff and volunteers deserve a special thank you for their roles in supporting the empowerment of refugees, people seeking asylum and migrants in vulnerable situations. Your daily dedication makes it possible for JRS Australia to complete our mission 'to accompany, serve and advocate' for the dignified living of the forcibly displaced.

We could never forget our amazing donors, supporters, and partners. With your generosity, we are able to provide critical services and support to the most vulnerable in our community, and accompany them on their often arduous journeys.

JRS Australia does not receive regular government funding. Our vital services are also provided free of charge. Therefore, the support from individuals, corporations, philanthropic organisations and community groups, like you, is essential and often, urgent. All of your contributions, whether big or small, have made such a tangible difference to the lives of so many people. Thank you for valuing our work. Your support is appreciated by the entire JRS team.

Finally, we are deeply grateful to the people that we serve. All of you are inspiring, brave, talented and resilient people. You have a real and unique contribution to make to this country. We are honoured to walk with you and we thank you.

We would like to thank the following grant providers and major supporters for your incredible support:

- Australia Post
- Catholic Church Insurance
- City of Parramatta Council Capacity Building Grants
- Cumberland City Council Community Grants
- Department of Social Services (DSS) Grant (through Australian Red Cross)
- Hogan Family Foundation
- Jesuit Province of Australia
- KPMG
- Life Without Barriers
- Limb Family Foundation
- Magnolia Foundation
- Marist Brothers of Australia
- Noel and Carmel O'Brien Foundation
- Planet Wheeler Foundation
- Scanlon Foundation
- Sisters of Charity Foundation
- Sisters of the Good Samaritan Foundation
- Sisters of Mercy Parramatta
- Vincent Fairfax Family Foundation (VFFF)
- VivCourt
- Women NSW – Domestic and Family Violence Innovation Fund

JRS would also like to extend a warm thank you to our remarkable partners who work alongside us tirelessly to provide hope, practical assistance to people seeking asylum:

- Act for Peace
- Asia Pacific Refugee Rights Network (APRRN)
- Asia Pacific Network on Refugees (APNOR)
- Australian Catholic University
- Australian National Committee on Refugee Women (ANCORW)
- Australian Red Cross
- Australian Women against Violence Alliance (AWAVA)
- Baker & McKenzie

- Canterbury-Bankstown LGA
- Carroll & O'Dea
- Catherine McAuley College
- Catholic Alliance for People Seeking Asylum (CAPSA)
- Catholic Archdiocese of Sydney
- Catholic Bishops Conference PNG
- Catholic Religious Australia (CRA)
- Catholic Mission
- Catholic Social Justice Council
- D'Ambra Murphy Lawyers
- DV NSW
- End Child Detention Coalition (ECDC)
- Forced Migration Network, University of New South Wales
- Grandmothers against Detention of Refugee Children NSW
- Hazara Women of Australia
- HOST International
- House of Welcome
- Humanitarian and Development Research Initiative (HADRI)
- Information & Cultural Exchange
- Jesuit Asia Pacific Conference (JCAP)
- Jesuit Communications
- Jesuit Education Australia
- Jesuit Mission
- Jesuit Province of Australia
- Jesuit Social Services
- JRS Asia Pacific
- JRS Cambodia
- JRS Indonesia
- JRS Myanmar
- JRS Thailand
- La Trobe University
- Life Without Barriers
- Mums 4 Refugees
- Mummies Paying It Forward
- Newman College, University of Melbourne
- NSW Humanitarian Hub
- OneSight
- Our Lady of Dolours Parish, Chatswood
- Our Lady of Lourdes Parish, Seven Hills

- Our Lady of Mercy College
- Our Lady of the Way Parish
- Parramatta Cathedral
- Parramatta Catholic Education Office
- Parramatta Marist High School
- Peter McMullin Centre on Statelessness, Melbourne Law School
- Refugee and Casework Support Service (RACS)
- Refugee Council of Australia
- Settlement Services International (SSI)
- STARTTS
- St Aloysius College
- St Canice's Parish
- St Columba's Parish, Leichhardt
- St Ignatius Riverview College
- St Vincent de Paul Society
- Sydney Alliance
- Sydney Catholic Early Childhood Services
- TAFE NSW
- The Asylum Seekers Centre
- The Diocese of Parramatta
- The Cardoner Project
- The City of Parramatta Council
- The Dandelion Foundation
- The Generous and the Grateful
- The Institute Sisters of Mercy Australia and PNG
- The Reginald Murphy Centre
- The Sisters of Charity
- The Sisters of Mercy Parramatta
- The Sisters of the Good Samaritan
- The Ursuline Sisters
- Training for Change
- Uniting Church of Australia
- Western Sydney University
- Xavier Social Justice Network

We are truly blessed to have such a magnificent group of people helping us to continue our mission to accompany, serve and advocate for the rights of refugees, people seeking asylum and migrants in vulnerable situations now and into the future.

Statement of comprehensive income for the year ended 31 December 2019

		\$
Revenue		1,642,436
Fundraising events	5,722	
Donations	802,063	
Project funding	75,000	
Grants	748,347	
Other income	11,304	
Expenses		1,681,957
Staffing expenses	547,993	
Administrative expenses	81,857	
Depreciation expenses	7,915	
Fundraising expenses	580	
Travel expenses	24,658	
Direct projects costs	634,155	
Grant expenses	384,799	
Results from operating activities		-39,521
Financial income		56,952
Financial costs		-1,487
Net financial income		55,465
Surplus for the period		15,944
Other comprehensive income		-
Total comprehensive income		15,944



Make a difference. *Please act now.*

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