

2020 annual report



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2 acknowledgement of country

JRS Australia acknowledges the
Traditional Custodians of Country
throughout Australia and their
connections to land, sea and community.

We pay our respect to their elders past,
present and emerging and extend that
respect to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait
Islander peoples today.

Board members

Sr. Annette Cunliffe RSC (Chair)
Catherine Verschuer
Elizabeth Biok
Dr. Eve Lester
Fr. Greg Jacobs SJ

Staff and Volunteers

Alma Gatica – Philanthropy and Development Coordinator

Amelia Savage – Community Development and Leadership Coordinator (From September 2020)

Anjali Roberts – Research and Policy Officer (Housing) (From May 2020)

Anne Nesbitt – Schools Engagement Coordinator/Project Officer – Bookends Project

Anne Porter – Volunteer Coordinator (until March 2020)

Anne Rutherford – Communications Coordinator

Carolina Gottardo – Director (Until November 2020)

Dimitra Papavassiliou – Project Coordinator, Finding Safety (Until November 2020)

Jane Turner – Volunteer Coordinator (From April 2020)

Josephine Rechichi – Project Coordinator, Finding Safety (From December 2020)

Katie Spiroski – Casework Manager

Kevser Pirbudak – Caseworker (From September 2020)

Kim Mandelik – Office Manager

Kim Smith – Caseworker (Until October 2020)

Leonie Dyer – Employment Project Coordinator (Until November 2020)

Maegan Williams – Caseworker (from April 2020)

Maeve Brown – Programs and Services Manager

Martina Thiermann – SBGV Caseworker (From July 2020)

Michael Melville – Foodbank Support Worker (From November 2020)

Nicole Ascaino – Caseworker (Until April 2020)

Nishadh Rego – Policy, Advocacy, and Communications Manager

Patricia Ho – Caseworker (From July 2020)

Pilar Correa – Finding Safety Project Officer (From April 2020 until July 2020)

Sarah Brown – Finding Safety Project Officer (Until March 2020)

Shaheen Whyte – Caseworker

Shatha Jajo – Finding Safety Project Officer

Zahra Hashemabadi-Barat – Foodbank Support Worker (From November 2020)

Zoe Grant – Community Organiser (From March 2020)



Staff take a short break for afternoon tea at Westmead.

4 chair's address



The year 2020 was, for JRS Australia as for most organisations, a year of challenge. The global pandemic was significant and it forced many plans to be radically altered. JRS Australia staff, volunteers, board and supporters responded with great generosity and they and our clients showed remarkable resilience in the face of these challenges.

Federal Government support through the *JobKeeper* program enabled us to retain staff. *Multicultural NSW* and *Women NSW* provided important funds for emergency relief and to support the *Finding Safety* program. However our clients were excluded from direct payments such as *JobSeeker* and many lost jobs and thus any financial security.

Our significant partnerships continued and our advocacy efforts continued despite the challenges posed by the necessity of holding most meetings remotely.

Many of our volunteers had to cease their usual activities, as they were considered vulnerable because of their age. However a large number of wonderful new volunteers offered their services, enabling such initiatives as food delivery to be commenced, replacing the Food Bank program where clients had previously come in to collect needed goods.

Many generous individuals and groups including parishes, schools, religious congregations and many faith based groups made donations of money, food and other basic goods, while a number of foundations also provided ongoing generous financial support.

These contributions, together with wonderfully creative and dedicated efforts of our staff enabled JRS Australia to support our clients through the difficult months from March onward. Many services, such as Casework support moved mainly to phone consultations, though some face-to-face support was still available, especially for clients of the Finding Safety program.

Another challenge was posed when we learnt that the premises at Westmead were to be taken over for an enlarged educational precinct for the Diocese. Thanks to Bishop Vincent Long van Nguyen and the Diocese we were offered the use of a significant part of the ground floor offices recently vacated by Diocesan services in Parramatta. Though the area is significantly smaller than the Westmead premises, the location is close to the *Finding Safety* site and provides easy access from Victoria Road.

A final challenge for the year was the resignation for family reasons of Ms Carolina Gottardo, our wonderful Country Director. Fortunately we were able to recruit an experienced and committed successor, Ms Tamara Domicelj, to commence in late January 2021.

Our significant partnerships continued and our advocacy efforts continued despite the challenges posed by the necessity of holding most meetings remotely. The upside of this was the opportunity to share our message with many people using webinar technology.

I am once more privileged to offer sincere thanks, on behalf of all at JRS Australia, to each person and group supporting us. Without you JRS Australia 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



As JRS Australia's incoming Country Director I am honoured to provide introductory remarks for an annual report which details the extraordinary achievements and challenges of a tumultuous year, pre-dating my commencement in the role.

I warmly thank and commend my predecessor, Carolina Gottardo, for her leadership across this and previous years. She brought great energy, compassion and insight to all her endeavours and her legacy is significant and enduring.

Reading this report and reflecting upon all that transpired, I am struck by the agility, generosity and dedication demonstrated by JRS Australia's wonderful staff, volunteers, Board and supporters – all of whom have dug deep, and then deeper, to deliver on JRS' mission, both despite and in light of such adverse circumstances.

I also pay homage to the refugees, people seeking asylum and migrants in situations of vulnerability whom we are privileged to accompany, serve, and advocate for and with. Their resilience and relentless drive to contribute is inspirational. And we are fortunate now to have increasing numbers of leaders with lived experience of displacement engaged in driving and delivering our efforts as members of staff and on our Board.

Reflecting deeply on how we can best create enabling environments for the meaningful participation and leadership of people with lived experience in all decisions affecting their communities' lives, is a strong commitment for JRS Australia. Moving forward, we will continue to strengthen our listening, learning and practice in this priority area.

Confronted with unprecedented levels of displacement world-wide relating to conflict, persecution and violence – now over one percent of the world's population - the voices of lived experience are more critical than ever to our collective efforts to find lasting solutions, for individuals and overall.

This year we will commemorate the 70th anniversary of the Refugees Convention - which Australia was instrumental in bringing to life. It is also the 60th anniversary of the Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness, an avoidable condition which

continues to entrench disadvantage and suffering world-wide.

We are also now celebrating an Ignatian Year, having just marked the 500th anniversary of the start of St Ignatius' conversion.

And also significantly, 2020 marked 40 years since the establishment of JRS, in shocked response to the mass exodus from Vietnam of people seeking asylum, in desperate circumstances, often in boats. Our founder Fr. Pedro Arrupe SJ called upon Jesuits worldwide to do what they could in the face of that tragedy, and received an overwhelming response – in the form of material aid, pastoral care, technical skills and advocacy in spaces of influence. As recently recognised by Pope Francis, he translated his shock at the acute suffering he observed of people forced to flee their homes into a deeply practical concern for their physical, psychological and spiritual welfare.

Moving forward, we will continue to strengthen our listening, learning and practice in this priority area.

And from Fr. Arrupe's vision and that outpouring of support, a model of engagement emerged; our three interconnected pillars based on Jesuit values, Ignatian Spirituality, Catholic Social Teaching, and secular human rights principles. In the words of another of my predecessors, Fr. Sacha Bermudez-Goldman SJ:

Our *accompaniment* is solidarity in action, bearing witness to injustices so they can be addressed and overcome, and being present with refugees in seemingly hopeless situations.

Our *service* is based on the needs of refugees as identified by refugees themselves, and is offered not as a work of charity, but as a matter of justice.

Our *advocacy* is grounded in refugee perspectives, the understandings afforded through our accompaniment and services, and geared towards engendering hope, promoting human dignity and supporting refugee voices safely to be heard.

JRS now works in 58 countries, and last year 687,000 people were direct beneficiaries of JRS projects worldwide.

In Australia, JRS assisted 3,882 people through 21,834

6 director's address

instances of service, including over 12,000 food deliveries, with the exceptional support of volunteers, parishes and schools. Further details of our services and our far-reaching outreach and advocacy efforts at local, national, regional (Asia-Pacific) and global levels are outlined in the pages that follow.

While proud of our efforts, we wish that all of this were not required. But 40 years on, it still is, more than ever. And it will be for some time to come.

As outlined in a recently issued JRS policy brief, "Seeking Protection in a Pandemic: COVID-19 and the Future of Asylum," the impact of the pandemic upon displaced people has been devastating. It is also deeply shocking, because it need not be this way. Viewed globally, Australia has fared and responded to the pandemic relatively well. However, at a time of enormous national expenditure, the displaced people with whom we journey were wilfully left behind, excluded from *Job Keeper*, *Job Seeker*

and other supports. Correspondingly, we now face an unprecedented need for our services, with an increase of over 260% in demand within a year.

We know that our efforts on the frontline (even where these have needed to be virtual) and in our advocacy and outreach are making a difference. With the generosity and loyalty of our wonderful supporters we look to the future with optimism that together we can find ways to 'build back better', with purpose and ambition.

As we could not mark our anniversary last year due to the pandemic, we will commemorate 40+1 years of JRS' existence in November of this year, along with our JRS family world-wide. We look forward to providing more details on our plans for this shortly.

In solidarity and with deepest gratitude,

Tamara Domicelj
Country Director, JRS Australia

While proud of our efforts, we wish that all of this were not required. But 40 years on, it still is, more than ever. And it will be for some time to come.



Fr. Pedro Arrupe at Centro Astalli, Rome in 1990

leaders with lived experience inspire during a time of crisis for all



Leaders with lived experience, academics, NGOs, and Church leaders called for people seeking asylum to be welcomed and protected during the pandemic.

In a year of profound pain and uncertainty, people seeking asylum, refugees, migrants and diaspora communities exercised courage and leadership in the face of Government policies to exclude and marginalise them further. Leadership appeared - as it always does - in different places and took varied forms. It was a privilege for JRS Australia to listen, accompany, and collaborate with leaders and communities with lived experience of displacement in these endeavours.

At the height of the bushfire crisis, Suda* felt he could and should do more to help people losing homes and firefighters on the frontline. Suda contacted an NGO in Western Sydney coordinating volunteers to assist with bushfire response, and through the NGO, travelled down to Batemans Bay. There Suda* spent ten straight days, fifteen hours a day, serving water and food to exhausted firefighters. Suda* felt empowered by giving back to the country where he had sought safety. "It makes me so happy to help. Help is not just a word, it is something more," he said.

After the pandemic struck, Mohammad* lost his part-time job. After receiving the *JobKeeper* payment into his account a number of times, he was told by his employer that the Government had specifically excluded people seeking asylum from the payment, and that he would have to return this money. Watching his Australian colleagues receiving *JobKeeper* and *JobSeeker* made Mohammad question the discriminatory nature of the policy. After all, he had paid taxes for years, and could not understand why he was not entitled to support in a time of need.

Mohammad contacted JRS Australia for support with food and rent for his family, but also asked if he

could assist JRS Australia's response in other ways. After obtaining legal advice and support, Mohammad worked with JRS Australia to share his experience and concerns about being left behind in meetings with Federal Government parliamentarians and the media.

Throughout the year many other leaders with lived experience of displacement who were affected by the pandemic spoke to the media, raised their concerns in meetings with decision-makers, and helped inform parishes, schools, and other community groups about the reality on the ground in Australia.

...leaders worked quietly, often without resources, and sometimes informally to support the most vulnerable in their own communities.

Moreover, leaders worked quietly, often without resources, and sometimes informally to support the most vulnerable in their own communities. Two anecdotes stand out in this regard. The first was the story of families in Western Sydney hosting daily free meals for community members who had lost jobs but could not access Federal Government support. The second was a story of leaders pooling together money to pay for rent, bonds, and utilities to help their community members maintain a roof over their heads.

People with lived experience of forced displacement are the first and last responders to situations of crisis. This reality must be recognised, supported, and given a platform.

8 year at a glance

**January
2020**

- JRS Australia participates in the Global Forum for Migration and Development (GFMD) in Quito, Ecuador.
- JRS Australia and RACS Australia appear before the Joint Select Committee on Australia's Family Law System in Canberra.
- More than 50 people are released from Bomana Immigration Centre in Port Moresby after a Catholic Alliance for People Seeking Asylum (CAPSA) trip to Port Moresby and advocacy.

**February
2020**

- JRS Australia participates in 'Unpacking Lived Experience Leadership' plenary panel at Refugee Alternatives Conference 2020 in Brisbane.

**March
2020**

- JRS Australia co-organises 'The Global Compact for Migration (GCM): Where to From Here' with the Humanitarian and Development Research Initiative (HADRI) at Western Sydney University.
- JRS Australia launches mobile food bank, online case work and employment assistance program, and remote financial relief support, in response to COVID-19 physical distancing restrictions.

**April
2020**

- JRS Australia releases a public discussion paper on 'COVID-19 and people seeking protection in the Australian community.'
- JRS Australia, the Justice and Peace Office (JPO) of the Sydney Catholic Archdiocese, and the Diocese of Parramatta coordinate public letter from more than fifty Catholic leaders to Prime Minister Scott Morrison calling for #NobodyLeftBehind during the pandemic.

**May
2020**

- JRS Australia organises a public webinar event for more than 150 people on the emerging impacts of the government's response to COVID-19 on people seeking asylum and refugees.

**June
2020**

- Demand for support with food, rental payments, utilities, and psycho-social support grows by 224% from pre-COVID days. JRS Australia and other NGOs warn of an impending crisis of homelessness and destitution.
- JRS Australia and RACS Australia are awarded 'Best Project' at NSW Humanitarian Awards for the JRS Australia Finding Safety project and the RACS Australia Women-At-Risk clinic
- JRS Australia is one of six organisations disbursing 'emergency relief' funding, as part of NSW Government announcement of \$1.7 million for people seeking asylum residing in the state.
- JRS Australia hosts a second public webinar entitled 'Between Welcome and Exclusion: Australia and the Politics of Exclusion during COVID-19' during Refugee Week 2020.



**July
2020**

- JRS Australia makes a submission to the Joint Select Committee on Temporary Migration.
- JRS Australia makes a submission to 'A Housing Strategy for NSW' Discussion Paper
- JRS Australia makes a submission to the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Social Policy and Legal Affairs Inquiry into Homelessness.
- JRS Australia Finding Safety Project begins to offer specialist SGBV Casework and delivers 89 dignity kits (containing pads, toiletries and other hygiene items) to women and girls at-risk

**August
2020**

- JRS Australia joins with sector partners, and Catholic parish leaders from across Sydney in asking Government MPs to include support for people seeking asylum and temporary visa holders in the October 2020 Federal Budget.

**September
2020**

- JRS Australia co-hosts public webinars entitled 'A Time for Grace' and 'Forced to Flee' on Migrant and Refugee Sunday.
- JRS Australia hosts training for the Refugee and DFV sectors on honour-based violence.
- 41 schools, including 17 Catholic schools join 'National Week of Solidarity' for the 16,000 children seeking asylum at risk of homelessness and destitution in Australia during COVID-19.
- The Australian Government begins releasing people seeking asylum into the community at short notice, with minimal support.

**October
2020**

- October Federal Budget cuts support for people seeking asylum in the community, whilst increasing funds available for immigration detention.
- Our 200th volunteer joins JRS Australia to assist the COVID-19 response.

**November
2020**

- JRS Finding Safety Project recruits and trains 6 women Community Mobilisers to raise awareness in the community of DFV risks and safer pathways for women seeking asylum and women temporary migrants. The Community Mobilisers create a "Violent-meter" tool and messages for 16 Days of Action.
- The JRS Australia Foodbank Program reaches 10,000 deliveries.

**December
2020**

- JRS Australia relocates from Westmead to Parramatta.
- JRS Australia participates in Catholic Alliance for People Seeking Asylum (CAPSA) webinar reflecting on the year that was and the challenges ahead for people seeking asylum.
- JRS Australia launches 'Christmas Cards for Change' campaign in collaboration with two young artists with lived experience in Sydney.

10 a snapshot of our mission in action during the pandemic



We worked to provide platforms, and opportunities for leaders with lived experience of forced displacement to empower their communities and live meaningful and dignified lives in Australia.



We collaborated with hundreds of volunteers, parishioners, school students, and community leaders to serve, accompany, and advocate for the rights of refugees and people seeking asylum.



We promoted the rights of refugees, people seeking asylum, and migrants in situations of vulnerability across Australia through parliamentary engagement, policy submissions, collaborative campaigns, and grassroots engagement.



We helped refugee and asylum seeking families pay for accommodation, specialist medication, utilities, bills, and other necessities.



We provided fresh food and other essential items to refugees and people seeking asylum in our community with the support of parishes, schools, and our wonderful volunteers, across more than twenty-five different routes in Sydney.



We made dozens of phone calls daily to refugees and people seeking asylum in our community to provide accompaniment, psycho-social support, and critical interventions in situations of crisis.



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



We provided a safe space, emergency relief, casework, leadership platforms, sector training, and prevention training in collaboration with women leaders of lived experience to women who are experiencing or at risk of SGBV

Services and Accompaniment

- JRS Australia served **3,882** people seeking asylum, refugees, and migrants in vulnerable situations.
- JRS Australia provided **21,834** unique instances of service in 2020, a 150% increase from 2019.



- JRS Australia provided **12,072** food deliveries to people in need with the support of volunteers, parishes, and schools, at an average of **232** deliveries per week. Before

March 2020, JRS Australia hosted **22** 'Cooking Together' sessions supporting **135** people with a hot meal.

- JRS Australia provided **1,285** people with **6,547** instances of specialist case work support, spanning accommodation needs, physical health and well-being needs, mental health crisis response, emergency financial relief, and leadership engagement.

- JRS Australia supported **733** women experiencing SGBV through the Finding Safety Project at the JRS Women's Space.



- JRS Australia made over **500** payments to individuals and families in order to help maintain tenancies, access emergency accommodation, and prevent homelessness.
- JRS Australia assisted **272** people with job readiness and employment through the Empowered to Work (ETW) partnership with House of Welcome.



- JRS Australia assisted people to complete **845** NSW Opal Card concession applications, ensuring access to discounted transport.

- More than **200** dedicated volunteers donated approximately **15,600** hours of service, accompaniment and advocacy for people in need.

Advocacy



- JRS Australia led or participated in **31** meetings with federal, state, and local government decision-makers.

- Leaders with lived experience of forced displacement led, contributed to, or participated in **252** unique instances of

advocacy and public education, including by speaking to politicians, in the media, to schools and parishes, by providing guidance on advisory committees, and by organising their own communities.

- JRS Australia produced five parliamentary submissions, four policy briefs, and two academic papers on issues such as income support for people seeking asylum during the pandemic, SGBV, housing and homelessness, migration into regional areas, temporary protection visas, and the Global Compacts on Refugees and on Migration.



- JRS Australia secured **30** media mentions, highlighting the issues, challenges, and resilience of the people we serve.

- JRS Australia collaborated with social justice groups to run **35** actions across Sydney.

- JRS Australia partnered with **61** schools including collaborated with **17** schools to participate in National Week of Solidarity 2020.



- JRS Australia engaged **2,878** school students through the Refugee Voices program.

12 our works

Casework and Emergency Relief

The Casework team began to see the impact of COVID-19 on the people we serve in March 2020. Demand for casework and financial support has always exceeded what JRS Australia can provide, but referrals to the Casework service increased by more than 60% in March and did not stop there.

People seeking asylum and temporary migrants lost their jobs *en masse* making even the purchase of food and medication difficult. Unlike other Australian residents, people seeking asylum, and the majority of temporary migrants could not access the Federal Government's emergency relief packages, *JobKeeper* or *JobSeeker*, even though many had been gainfully employed and paying tax for several years.

Despite the NSW Government's moratorium on evictions, people worried about paying, or repaying, rent and were still threatened with eviction. Many individuals and families were already living in overcrowded accommodation and were not able to physically isolate, and worried about how they would access health support without money or without Medicare. Mental health declined sharply, particularly for those far away from family overseas who were ill with or who did not survive COVID-19.

Along with the significant impact on health and welfare, COVID-19 impacted the services that clients were able to access. The Casework team was forced to switch to a completely remote way of working. Almost all contact with clients was via telephone and the team itself had to adapt to managing client crises from their homes and without the immediate support of their team around them.

Housing services had to limit their intake of new clients due to spacing restrictions in refuges and social activities were largely put on hold – another loss for those who already felt disconnected from their communities.

Throughout the year, the Casework team provided more than 6,500 unique instances of service, an average of 17 instances of service per day. Support included everything from helping families find crisis accommodation to crisis responses and referrals for people expressing acute distress.

Despite the pressures of 2020 created by COVID-19, JRS Australia still saw a tightening of Status Resolution Support Service (SRSS) eligibility criteria, ongoing exits from SRSS support even for those with significant vulnerabilities, and the transitioning of people from detention into the community.



Members of JRS Australia's Casework team in mid 2020



Volunteers and staff pack food parcels for people in need.

Foodbank

As the need for casework and emergency relief steadily increased throughout the height of the pandemic, so too did the need for food security. While the provision of a pantry-style food bank has been a part of the support offered by JRS Australia for many years now, never before has the need been so great. Within a matter of weeks, JRS shifted from providing food to roughly 80-100 people per week to delivering to over 350 households representing over 950 people per week, a 270% increase in service.

In order to meet the needs of those in our community who did not have access to another safety net through the pandemic, JRS Australia had to rapidly recruit volunteers and devise a COVID-safe packing, dispatching and delivery model, as well as secure funds for two part-time Foodbank Support Workers. The increased demand also meant securing or upscaling support from a range of sources including FoodbankNSW, OzHarvest, Addison Road Community Centre, the City of Parramatta Council, the City of Sydney Council, Cumberland City Council, and the Scanlon Foundation.

JRS Australia has also never received so many donations from parishes, schools and individuals, and remains in awe of the generosity of our supporters and their solidarity with people seeking asylum and migrants in vulnerable situations during such uncertain times.

As a result JRS Australia was able to provide 12,072 food deliveries to individuals and families, at an average of 232 deliveries per week, or 33 every single day.

While Australia may be shifting into a COVID-recovery phase, many of those served by JRS Australia remain in crisis, struggling to secure employment in an increasingly casualised economy that still doesn't recognise the strengths and skills of people on bridging or temporary visas. The hope for 2021 is to work with key sector partners, as well as food rescue charities, and local partners to develop a more sustainable food bank service.

...we were able to provide 12,072 food deliveries to individuals and families, at an average of 232 deliveries per week, or 33 every single day.

14 our works



JRS Australia staff put together a care package for someone in need

Empowered to work

The Empowered to Work (ETW) program has been run by JRS Australia and the House of Welcome since 2017, aiming to facilitate pathways to meaningful employment for refugees and people seeking asylum.

This was one of the most challenging years ETW has faced. This was one of the most challenging years ETW has faced with an increased number of referrals, increased loss of work, and reduced employment hours for many of those previously engaged in the program. People on bridging or temporary visas were not prioritised for work given their ineligibility for *JobKeeper*, with employers mostly choosing to preference citizens and permanent residents.

Nonetheless, the program provided support for work readiness through resume and cover letter writing, job searching, interview preparation and awareness of rights. Whilst working closely with employers and small businesses, the program organised a series of job placements to support people seeking asylum to access employment. Despite the support offered, people faced significant barriers in a much more competitive market. Language barriers, lack of local experience and social capital, and unrecognised qualifications put them at a disadvantage. Where

people were able to find work, it was often in survival jobs which had a high risk of exploitation and did not tap into the significant skills and expertise on offer.

In previous years, ETW was supported by teams of volunteers, however, due to the pandemic many volunteers with pre-existing health conditions or who are over the age of 70 had to take a step back. The program remained staffed solely by the employment coordinator working across two organisations.

By the end of 2020, as lockdowns and social distancing restrictions eased, JRS Australia and House Of Welcome made the decision to invest in their own employment programs in order to respond to the scale of the response needed to help people find work. In late 2020, JRS Australia secured a further year of funding from generous donors to scale the program and engage additional staff in this important work.

Though presented with many challenges in 2020, JRS Australia remains committed to working alongside the people we serve to provide the essential support needed to navigate the Australian job market and to secure and sustain employment.

volunteers step up during the pandemic



As in all other areas, 2020 was a year like no other for our team of dedicated volunteers. JRS Australia started off the year with a dedicated and long-serving group of 90 volunteers, but by April the team had been hugely reduced as a result of COVID-19. Only 23 of those volunteers were able to continue assisting JRS Australia after the rest of the team were forced to step back due to COVID-19 safety protocols for people with pre-existing health conditions and those over the age of 70.

At the same time as losing most of the volunteer team, JRS Australia drastically altered the way it delivered services in order to continue to reach people facing the most vulnerability, despite the physical restrictions imposed by lockdown measures and health risks. In order to do this the organisation needed to recruit new volunteers, and fast!

The response to volunteer callouts throughout 2020 has been absolutely incredible. At a time when most people were staying home out of fear or due to restrictions, while dealing with their own situations of unemployment and altered realities, a huge number of people put their hands up to assist people seeking asylum, refugees, and migrants in vulnerable

situations, at their time of great need.

In the period from April to December 2020, more than 200 people joined our team of dedicated volunteers, assisting with reception, packing parcels of food, driving and delivering food all over Sydney, making phone calls to clients to ensure deliveries ran smoothly, and collecting generous donations of food from various groups of supporters. The incredible work of our volunteers has ensured that nearly 1000 people received food every week and we are immensely grateful for the support and commitment of our volunteers in a year of unprecedented challenges.

Volunteers also assisted with communications, research, and events coordination at various times of the year, helping to get the message out about the reality on the ground.

As Marianne Dwyer, a food bank volunteer, says:

"I always loved the chat about what our friends might now cook that night for a family dinner and to hear the review of how it went when they came back the next week or fortnight. COVID-19 robbed us of 'the chat' and much more. It is now all about the race - getting food out to people as quickly as we can so nobody is left behind."



Volunteers are the backbone of JRS Australia's work.

16 the women's space

Responding to Sexual and Gender-Based Violence During a Pandemic

Strength, tenacity, courage, and creativity are the words that come to mind when reflecting on the team and participants of the JRS Australia Finding Safety project. The Finding Safety team adapted and responded effectively to the needs of women seeking asylum, refugee women and women on temporary visas during the pandemic.

The biggest change to the Finding Safety project in 2020, was the commencement of our specialist SGBV case management program. For women already experiencing, or at risk of SGBV, the pandemic added another layer of risk, and another barrier to overcome. The team decided to maintain some face-to-face appointments under strict safety protocols, as it was identified that women at risk of SGBV needed the ability to physically leave the violence and access a safe space. The SGBV caseworkers brought significant expertise to this work.

The strength of the Finding Safety Project has been the ability to provide a holistic, wrap-around service that supports women right through crisis to safety and beyond. A major success of the project has been the ongoing engagement of the women supported, who have indicated that they themselves want to play a role in reducing the impact of violence and discrimination on the lives of others. Women supported have gone on to participate in educational workshops on self-empowerment and human rights, have since become members of our advisory committee, helping to design programs and activities, or are trained members of the community mobiliser team.

The Finding Safety Project has also grown in reputation as an example of good practice in the prevention of SGBV and in upholding the dignity of women survivors seeking asylum. We delivered a range of sector training workshops and, in collaboration with our advisory committee, created a range of resources including the “violent-meter” tool for identifying red flags in relationships.

We are determined to strengthen the safe visibility of women seeking asylum, women on temporary visas and refugee women. Our advocacy and awareness raising efforts aim to support women survivors to share



Advisory Committee group members, volunteers, and staff of the JRS Women's Space gather for International Women's Day 2020.

their stories and priorities and to be heard by other women, support services, government departments, community leaders and decision-makers. Our efforts are working, we are recording more and more enquiries and requests for information and advice from a broader range of services than ever.

"I came during coronavirus to the Women's Space. I needed help with food, help with personal items. I needed support for help for my child. I couldn't go to shops because of the virus. Women's Space helped me with food and household items, with money and personal items."

"I was alone and had no one to talk to. The Women's Space helped me meet other women. It is good to meet other people who maybe came by boat like me. It helps to listen to each other. It is better to share our problems and support each other."

"I like being on the advisory committee now because I can suggest activities like computer classes, English classes, and women's lunches. I like to help in the activities. I offer to do henna for the women."

Quotes from Advisory Committee Members and Participants, JRS Australia Women's Space



Leaders with lived experience, organisers from Social Justice Around the Bay (SJ Around the Bay) and JRS Australia participate in 'Forced Like Jesus to Flee', a public webinar for Migrant and Refugee Sunday.

Overview

The first three months of 2020 looked very different from the following nine. JRS Australia started the year with a clear policy and advocacy plan to help improve the lives of people seeking protection, refugees, and migrants in vulnerable situations.

In January and February, JRS Australia worked with partners on the national 'Fair Process' Working Group to develop an advocacy and campaign strategy for abolishing the Legacy Caseload, reintroducing permanent protection for people found to be refugees, and financial support for people seeking asylum in the community.

JRS Australia appeared before the National Inquiry into Family Law, urging parliamentarians to consider significant challenges that women seeking asylum and on temporary visas face in relation to family separation, domestic violence/family violence (DV/FV) and divorces, and accessing justice.

Then the COVID-19 pandemic began, and the Federal Government chose to exclude people seeking asylum and other temporary visa holders from *JobKeeper*, *JobSeeker*, and other pandemic support services.

In the first month after the pandemic began, JRS Australia spoke to community leaders affected by the emerging mobility restrictions, job losses, and the absence of Federal Government support. We

began monitoring and documenting the fast-growing volume of requests for emergency assistance – rent assistance, food, and medicines, and raising these issues in civil society forums. We also began contacting decision-makers at federal, state and local government area (LGA) level about these trends.

Through the year, we continued to participate in ongoing policy and advocacy work beyond the context of the pandemic. We made submissions to:

- the Senate Standing Committee on Social Policy and Legal Inquiry into Family, Domestic and Sexual Violence;
- the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Social Policy and Legal Affairs Inquiry into Homelessness;
- the NSW's Housing Strategy Discussion Paper;
- the Select Committee on Temporary Migration; and
- the Joint Select Committee on Temporary Migration.

In October and November 2020, JRS Australia worked closely with Asylum Seekers Centre and House of Welcome to respond to the Federal Government's decision to remove people from community detention arrangements at short notice, with minimal support. JRS Australia briefed interested Federal decision-makers, and also released a statement acknowledging the importance of alternatives to detention, whilst preventing situations of destitution in the community.

18 advocacy

Catholics welcome and protect those left behind

From the earliest days of the pandemic, Catholics across Australia opened their hearts and minds to those left behind, supporting thousands of people to navigate the pandemic and making their voices heard.

In Sydney alone, more than fifty parishes and schools supported JRS Australia to offer food, medication, and emergency rental assistance for those in need. The Catholic Archdiocese of Sydney, the Catholic Diocese of Parramatta, and the Catholic Diocese of Broken Bay all supported the call for additional support through notices, parish bulletins, drop-off points, and facilitating connection for support.

Soon, community members began asking what else they could do to ensure that people were not left behind.

Across Refugee Week and on Migrant and Refugee Sunday, parishioners from North Sydney, Cronulla, Social Justice Around the Bay (SJ Around the Bay), and the Diocese of Parramatta worked with JRS

Australia to organise public webinars on the issues. It was a privilege to have Bishop Vincent Long (Bishop of Parramatta), and Fr. Frank Brennan SJ join us for one of these webinars, 'A Time for Grace.'

Through the year, parish, school, and community leaders also organised meetings with their Federal parliamentarians to highlight what they were already doing and ask the Federal Government to act. JRS Australia provided facts, stories, and logistical support where required.

Meetings occurred in at least nine electorates across Sydney and beyond. In total, parish leaders led or participated in 35 actions through the year, and more than 9,000 people signed the Catholic petition calling for nobody to be left behind.

At a national level, Catholics also stood in support of people and families in need. In April 2020, JRS Australia, the Catholic Archdiocese of Sydney and the Diocese of Parramatta coordinated a letter to Federal decision-makers calling on people to be released from immigration detention facilities and those in the community to be included in COVID-19 support measures.

More than 50 Catholic leaders from around the country signed the letter, including Bishops from Sydney, Parramatta, Darwin, and Adelaide/Port Pirie, more than 15 Heads of Congregation, and the CEOs of major national Catholic organisations including Caritas and the St. Vincent De Paul Society.

Subsequently clergy, congregational leaders, and CEOs held meetings with Ministers and other decision-makers around the country calling for nobody to be left behind.

'Nobody Left Behind' sector campaign

Simultaneously, JRS Australia also worked with the Refugee Council of Australia (RCOA), and key civil society partners to respond to the Federal Government's exclusion of people seeking asylum and temporary migrants from *JobKeeper* and *JobSeeker*. The campaign called for the Federal Government to include families and individuals in these programs, expand the Special Benefit Program (SBP) and provide emergency relief to the most vulnerable.

In addition to providing a platform for women and men seeking asylum to speak directly with decision-makers and media, JRS Australia also provided case studies, statistics, and briefings to Federal and State governments, the Departments of Home

A Time for Grace
World Day of Migrants and Refugees Webinar
Join us on World Migrant and Refugee Sunday to explore how the pandemic can be a time as a nation and individuals to extend grace to the most vulnerable. The expert panel will explore what this looks like within our public policy, our theology and our own actions.

Speakers:
Introduction by the Bishop of Parramatta, Most Reverend Vincent Long Van Nguyen OFM Conv
Fr Frank Brennan SJ AO
Australian Jesuit Priest, Human Rights Lawyer, and Academic
Nishadh Rego
Policy, Advocacy and Communications Manager, JRS Australia
Julie Macken
Research and Project Officer, Justice and Peace Office, Catholic Archdiocese of Sydney
Leader with lived experience
TBC

Sunday 27 September, 5:00-6:30pm
Register: <https://bit.ly/3IR8RDt>
For more information email Zoe at zoe.grant@jrs.org.au

'A Time for Grace' was co-hosted by JRS Australia, Nangami, and the Justice and Peace Office.



Students from John XIII Perth participate in the National Week of Solidarity with fellow students seeking asylum, whose families were left out of support during the pandemic.

Affairs, Social Services (both Federal and State), Communities and Justice, Multicultural affairs (both Federal and State), peak bodies, and healthcare professionals, including the Public Health Association of Australia (PHAA).

JRS Australia, RCOA, and our fellow partner organisations, met with the Prime Minister's Office, the Minister for Immigration, the Minister for Social Services, the Shadow Minister for Social Services, the Shadow Minister for Multiculturalism, and the Shadow Minister for Border Protection at various points in the year to share these concerns and put forward solutions.

JRS Australia was also part of multiple media groups working with leaders and communities affected to ensure that their stories, challenges, and concerns were not forgotten. Campaign stories appeared in the ABC, SBS, The Herald Sun, the Saturday Paper, Guardian Australia and elsewhere.

In the lead up to the October 2020 Federal Budget, additional support for temporary visa holders was canvassed, owing to significant advocacy efforts campaign partners, and local communities, primarily in NSW. Although much more support was and continues to be required, some emergency relief for temporary visa holders was provided to people seeking asylum through the Australian Red Cross.

The NSW Government supports people seeking asylum and TV holders

In June 2020, the NSW Government announced an unprecedented \$6 million in emergency assistance for temporary visa holders, including \$1.7 million to support people seeking asylum in the state.

The announcement came on the back of a city-wide call from civil society organisations, faith groups, diaspora communities, and those with lived experience, asking the State Government to step in and support those left behind.

Ministers and MPs heard more than forty stories of people living in the community, losing jobs, and having no recourse to Federal Government assistance. JRS Australia provided briefings on the emerging needs, to Ministers, bureaucrats, and civil society peak bodies. Catholic leaders in Manly, Cronulla, Seven Hills, Parramatta, and North Sydney contacted their State members to ask that temporary visa holders, including people seeking asylum, not be left behind.

Speaking at the time, JRS Australia Director, Carolina Gottardo said:

"The announcement from Minister Lee is a significant development for people seeking protection who have lost jobs as a result of the COVID-19 crisis, have no access to any Federal Government support, and cannot return home because they fled persecution.

"The Berejiklian Government has shown real leadership in ensuring that women, children, and men who for so long have lived, worked, studied, prayed, and paid taxes in Australia are not left behind in their hour of need."

Schools and The Bookends Project

In 2020, JRS Australia continued to work with Jesuit, Catholic and independent schools to raise the issues faced by refugees and people seeking asylum, offering two school programs, Refugee Voices, a program based on storytelling by a person with lived experience and Community Conversations (formerly 'Table Talks').

Despite COVID-19, JRS was able to adapt the process of engaging with schools, transitioning to an online platform with 575 students hearing a speaker with lived experience share her/his story via the Refugee Voices program. An additional 2878 students learned about the global context regarding refugees and how JRS supports them via zoom presentations. There were 41

20 advocacy

schools that answered our call for food bank donations, which was a significant increase from previous years.

As part of National Solidarity Week, which was held to support the Nobody Left Behind campaign, JRS Australia invited schools across the country to conduct a Circle of Silence to show solidarity for the 16,000 children seeking asylum without access to Federal Government support. Of the schools partnered with JRS Australia, 16 schools took action and posted advocacy messages on social media, calling for the government to provide a safety net for these families.



Students at St. Aloysius College conduct a 'Circle of Silence' in solidarity with peers seeking protection in Australia.

The Bookends Project

The Bookends Project refers to two 'bookends of rejection' that mark Australian history, namely the treatment of Indigenous Australians and of forcibly displaced people. During Refugee Week 2020, the inaugural Refugee Libraries were launched and are now available on the JRS Australia website.

Two persons seeking asylum and two First Nations students from local Jesuit schools, met together and were interviewed. The interviews revealed the strong connection Indigenous Australians feel to their country and the importance of beginning activities with a welcome to or an acknowledgement of country. Both groups wished that all newly arrived refugees could be welcomed by First Nations people as the traditional custodians of the land.

The Bookends Project has begun hosting "Chats for Change" with The Cardoner Project with speakers with lived experience. A First Nations representative shared his story with a group of university students, enabling the students to have a truthful conversation and to learn more about First Nations communities.

In 2020, a Jesuit school introduced an integrated unit of work based on The Bookends. Students were given the opportunity to research the topic of refugees and First Nations and come up with persuasive ways to change hearts and minds. Some students simulated walking in the steps of refugees which they found confronting. The final assessment task for the year nine students was to create a museum artefact that represented one item that was most significant to them and their journey.

Global Compacts speaker



Human Rights Commissioner Ed Santow spoke at a workshop on the Global Compacts co-organised by JRS Australia and Western Sydney University

Action-research for systemic reform

Access to safe, affordable, and sustainable housing, experiences of home, and homelessness are all core challenges for people seeking asylum in Australia. Since the pandemic began, more people than ever have experienced rental stress, rough sleeping, and a sense of uncertainty at unprecedented rates, as a result of losing their jobs.

A Place to Call Home is an action-research project, funded by the Mercy Foundation and Life Without Barriers (LWB), to address the gap in evidence on the recent experiences of home and homelessness for people seeking asylum and develop grounded evidence for reform in this crucial area of work.

The project is being carried out in partnership with Dr. Elizabeth Conroy from Western Sydney University (WSU), and is also guided by an advisory group comprising the National Refugee-led Advisory and Advocacy Group (NRAAG), House of Welcome, Australian Red Cross, Vinnies NSW, House of Welcome, the Tenants Union of NSW, and Department of Communities and Justice (DCJ).

The intended outcomes of the project are as follows:

- that the narrative of housing experiences of people seeking asylum is evidence-based, nuanced, and compelling
- that Australians have an increased understanding of participants' experiences of home, housing and homelessness as a result
- that civil society actors have an increased understanding of how to work with people to secure housing and reduce the risk of homelessness, particularly where people are post-review

**We want to hear about
your experiences of finding
a place to call home**



JRS and Western Sydney designed a survey asking people in need about their experiences of home and homelessness

- that project partners have an increased understanding of how to advocate strategically on housing for people seeking asylum.

Fourteen in-depth interviews have been conducted with people seeking asylum, including seven women and six people who are 'post-review' in the refugee status determination (RSD) process. The preliminary findings are being strengthened by a survey of more than a 100 people seeking asylum in NSW.

A Place to Call Home builds on existing partnerships between JRS Australia and other sector actors. The Foundations Housing project investigated existing housing options for people seeking asylum in NSW, and found that there were significant gaps, both in viable options and evidence on the experiences of people affected.

The final report will be launched later this year, and followed by advocacy at different levels.

22 acknowledgements

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

- Australia Post
- Catholic Church Insurance
- Catholic Diocese of Parramatta
- 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
- Mercy Foundation
- Multicultural NSW
- Noel and Carmel O'Brien Foundation
- Planet Wheeler Foundation
- Scanlon Foundation
- The City of Parramatta Council
- The City of Sydney Council
- The Sisters of Charity Foundation
- The Sisters of the Good Samaritan Foundation
- The 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 those in need:

- Addison Road Community Centre
- All Saints Catholic Parish Liverpool
- All Saints Catholic College Liverpool
- Act for Peace
- Anglicare
- Anti-Slavery Australia
- Asia Pacific Refugee Rights Network (APRRN)
- Asia Pacific Network on Refugees (APNOR)
- Asylum Seekers Centre
- Asylum Seeker Resource Centre (ASRC)
- Australian Catholic Social Justice Council
- Australian Catholic University
- Australian Dental Association - Filling the Gap
- Australian National Committee on Refugee Women (ANCORW)
- Australian Province of the Society of Jesus
- Australian Red Cross
- Australian Women against Violence Alliance (AWAVA)
- Baker & McKenzie

- Barilla Ltd.
- Blue Mountains Refugee Support Group (BMMSG)
- Bronte Public School
- Brigidine Asylum Seeker Project (BASP)
- Canterbury-Bankstown LGA
- Carroll & O'Dea
- Catherine McAuley Catholic College, Westmead
- Catholic Alliance for People Seeking Asylum (CAPSA)
- Catholic Archdiocese of Sydney
- Catholic Diocese of Parramatta
- Catholic Bishops Conference PNG
- Catholic Education Diocese of Parramatta
- Catholic Parish of Lindfield-Killara
- Catholic Social Services Australia (CSSA)
- Catholic Social Services Victoria (CSSA)
- Catholic Religious Australia (CRA)
- Catholic Mission
- Christ the King North Rocks Catholic Parish, North Rocks
- CORE Community Services
- D'Ambra Murphy Lawyers
- Domestic Violence Service Management (DVSM)
- Domestic Violence NSW (DV NSW)
- De La Salle Catholic High School, Cronulla
- End Child Detention Coalition (ECDC)
- Five Dock Public School, Five Dock
- Foodbank NSW/ACT
- Forced Migration Network, University of New South Wales
- French's Forest Catholic Parish
- Grandmothers against Detention of Refugee Children NSW
- Good Shepherd
- Grantham Heights Uniting Church, Seven Hills
- Hazara Women of Australia
- Holroyd/ Parramatta Mobile Minds
- Holy Name of Mary Catholic Parish, Hunters Hill
- Holy Spirit Catholic Parish, Carnes Hill
- HOST International
- House of Welcome
- House of Sadaqa
- Humanitarian and Development Research Initiative (HADRI)
- Immigration Advice and Rights Centre (IARC)
- Information & Cultural Exchange
- Islamic Relief Australia
- Insight Exchange
- Jesuit Asia Pacific Conference (JCAP)
- Jesuit Communications
- Jesuit Education Australia
- Jesuit Mission
- Jesuit Social Services
- JRS Asia Pacific
- La Trobe University
- Loreto Kirribilli
- Life Without Barriers
- Marian Catholic College, Kenthurst
- Mary's House
- Mercy Catholic College, Chatswood
- Monte Sant' Angelo Mercy College, North Sydney
- Mums 4 Refugees
- Mummies Paying It Forward
- Nappy Collective
- National Zakat Foundation
- Nangami Peace and Justice Group
- Newman College, University of Melbourne
- NSW Humanitarian Hub
- NSW Refugee Health Service
- OneSight
- Open Support
- Our Lady of Dolours Parish, Chatswood
- Our Lady of Dolours Primary School, Chatswood
- Our Lady of Lourdes Catholic Parish, Baulkham Hills
- Our Lady of Lourdes Parish, Seven Hills
- Our Lady of Mercy College, Parramatta
- Our Lady of the Rosary Parish, Kensington
- Our Lady of the Way Catholic Parish, Emu Plains
- Our Lady of the Way Jesuit Parish North Sydney
- Our Lady Queen of Peace Catholic Parish, Greystanes
- OzHarvest
- Parramatta Marist High School, Westmead
- Parramatta Mission
- Peter McMullin Centre on Statelessness, Melbourne Law School
- Parramatta Women's Shelter
- Prosper
- Refugee Advice and Casework Service)
- Refugee Council of Australia
- Sacred Heart Parish Blackheath
- Salvation Army
- Salvation Army - Trafficking and Slavery Safe House
- Santa Sabina College, Strathfield
- Settlement Services International (SSI)
- Share the Dignity
- Social Justice Around the Bay (SJ Around the Bay)
- STARTTS
- Stella Maris College, Manly
- St Aloysius College, North Sydney
- St Aloysius of Gonzaga Catholic Parish, Cronulla
- St Ambrose Catholic Primary School, Concord West
- St Anthony's Catholic Primary School, Toongabbie
- St Anthony of Padua Catholic Church, Toongabbie
- St Canice's Jesuit Parish, Elizabeth Bay
- St Columba's Catholic Parish, Leichhardt
- St Declan's Catholic Parish, Penshurst
- St Declan's Catholic Primary School, Penshurst

- St Francis Xavier Catholic Parish, Ashbury
- St Joachim's Catholic Parish, Lidcombe
- St John Bosco Catholic Parish, Engadine
- St Ignatius Riverview College
- St Leo's Catholic College, Wahroonga
- St Luke's Catholic College, Marsden Park
- St Kevin's Catholic Parish, Eastwood
- St Madeline Sophie Barat Catholic Parish, Kenthurst
- St Mark's Catholic Parish, Drummoyne
- St Mark's Catholic College, Stanhope Gardens
- St Mary's Catholic Primary School, North Sydney
- St Monica's Catholic Parish, Richmond
- St Oliver's Catholic Primary School, Harris Park
- St. Patrick's Cathedral, Parramatta
- St Patrick's Catholic Parish, Mortlake
- St Patrick's Catholic Primary School, Guildford
- St Pius X College, Chatswood
- St Thomas Aquinas Catholic Parish, Springwood
- St Vincent's Catholic Parish, Ashfield
- St Vincent's Catholic Primary School, Ashfield
- St Vincent de Paul Society
- Sydney Alliance
- Sydney Catholic Early Childhood Services
- TAFE NSW
- Thank You Ltd.
- The Cardoner Project
- The City of Parramatta Council
- The Dandelion Support Network
- The Generous and the Grateful
- The Institute Sisters of Mercy Australia and PNG
- The Reginald Murphy Centre
- The Reverend Bill Crews Foundation
- The Sisters of Charity
- The Sisters of Mercy Parramatta
- The Sisters of the Good Samaritan
- The Presentation Sisters
- The Ursuline Sisters
- Thread Together
- Toastmasters
- Tzu Chi Foundation
- Uniting Church of Australia
- Uniting Early Learning and Child Care
- University of NSW
- Western Sydney University
- Women In Migration Network
- 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 2020

		\$
Revenue		3,292,346
Donations	1,504,268	
Project Funding	6,960	
Grants	1,278,506	
Covid-19 Government Support - JobKeeper and Cash flow boost	491,800	
Other income	10,812	
Expenses		2,064,824
Staffing expenses	622,897	
Administrative expenses	84,717	
Depreciation expenses	7,221	
Travel expenses	3,019	
Direct project costs	593,659	
Grant expenses	753,311	
Results from operating activities		1,227,522
Financial income		74,095
Financial costs		-3,346
Net financial income		70,749
Surplus for the period		1,298,271
Other comprehensive income		-
Total comprehensive income		1,298,271



Make a difference. *Please act now.*

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