

# 2021 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 elders past and  
present and extend that respect to all  
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander  
peoples today.

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JRS Australia is committed to adopting environmentally sustainable practices. As part of this, we will be reducing our future printing and mail-out activities, and prioritising the development of online resources. We will happily continue providing print versions of our Annual Report and LINK Newsletter to all who wish to receive them in that form.

In order to assist us in meeting your preferences please contact us on [info@jrs.org.au](mailto:info@jrs.org.au) or 02 9356 3888 if you DO wish to continue receiving paper versions of our publications. Thank you!

*JRS Australia is committed to taking action to care for our common home, in line with the Australian Jesuit Province Apostolic Plan 2019-24 priority “Heal humanity and our world” and with Pope Francis’ Laudato si’ plea that we: “hear both the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor”.*

## Board Members

Sr. Annette Cunliffe, RSC (Chair)  
Catherine Verschuer  
Dr. Elizabeth Biok  
Dr. Eve Lester  
Fr. Greg Jacobs, SJ  
Muzafar Ali  
Hon. Reba Meagher

## Staff

Alma Gatica - Philanthropy and Development Coordinator  
Amelia Savage - Community Development and Leadership Coordinator *(on Maternity Leave from July 2021)*  
Anjali Roberts - Research and Policy Officer (Housing)  
Anne Nesbitt - Schools Engagement Coordinator and Project Officer - Bookends *(until Dec. 2021)*  
Anne Rutherford - Communications Coordinator *(until April 2021)*

Chloe Tremblay-Goyette - SGBV Caseworker *(from July 2021)*  
Colette Thompson - Philanthropy Advisor  
Georgia-Rae Cobon - Caseworker *(from August 2021)*  
Hedra Abdo - Finance Assistant *(from June 2021)*  
Jane Turner - Volunteer Coordinator  
Jenny Cao - Digital Media and Communications Coordinator *(from June 2021)*  
Josephine Rechichi - Project Coordinator - Finding Safety  
Katie Spiroski - Casework Manager  
Kevser Pirbudak - Caseworker  
Kim Mandelik - Office Manager  
Maegan Williams - Caseworker *(until June 2021)*  
Maeve Brown - Assistant Country Director  
Martina Josephson - SGBV Caseworker *(on Maternity Leave from March 2021)*

Micahel Melville - Foodbank Support Worker  
Nishadh Rego - Policy, Advocacy, and Communications Manager  
Sara Muzamil - SGBV Caseworker  
Shaheen Whyte - Caseworker  
Shatha Jajo - Project Officer, Finding Safety  
Tamara Domicelj - Country Director  
Tamana Mirzada - Employment Project Coordinator *(from January 2021)*  
Tonny Ahmed - Caseworker *(from October 2021)*  
Zahra Hashemabadi Barat - Foodbank Support Worker  
Zaki Haidari - Employment Support Worker *(from January 2021)* and Leadership Coordinator *(from July 2021)*  
Zoe Grant - Community Organiser



*JRS Australia staff meeting over Zoom during the height of COVID-19 lockdowns. For the first time since the pandemic started, JRS Australia offices ceased face to face services and shifted to online working.*

# 4 chair's address



JRS Australia was delighted to welcome Tamara Domicelj as its new Country Director in early 2021. Tamara came with extensive experience in the field of refugee protection and forced migration and with a passion for serving those marginalised by having to flee war, terror and

disaster. She also has extensive management and leadership expertise.

Following the move from Westmead, we began to settle into the Parramatta premises, so kindly made available by the Parramatta Diocese, with the support of Bishop Vincent Long Van Nguyen. Though the space may be insufficient for our ongoing needs, its location is convenient and close to the cottage so kindly made available by the Sisters of Mercy, Parramatta and used by the *Finding Safety* project. As, once more, many staff were working from home and food deliveries were impacted by the Pandemic, the office space served our needs reasonably well.

Many of the challenges of 2020 persisted, making demands on our creativity and the generosity of our staff and supporters, and their resilience.

Despite hopes that the worst of the COVID-19 pandemic had passed, 2021 saw the arrival of the Delta variant and renewed outbreaks, with associated restrictions imposed. These particularly affected the parts of Sydney where most of our clients reside.

Many of the challenges of 2020 persisted, making demands on our creativity and the generosity of our staff and supporters, and their resilience. Gifts of time, money, food and other basic goods continued. An important priority was staff wellbeing.

Finances continued to be a concern, particularly when food deliveries had to be suspended and financial help provided instead. However through applications for and receipt of emergency relief grants, through partnerships with other refugee organisations, community groups and State government and local Councils, we were able to avoid a deficit. A truly heroic effort and a wonderful result!

An important initiative was the organisation of a series of vaccine clinics for our people, in partnership with NSW Health and the Parramatta Diocese. JRS staff and volunteers who were themselves vaccinated helped with these, so providing encouragement to many who might have otherwise been reluctant.

The takeover of Kabul by the Taliban in mid-August challenged the world and had an immediate impact on JRS Australia. Many of our staff, clients, volunteers, and Board members have family or close contacts in Afghanistan. The dire situation there caused heartache and anxiety. In addition, as JRS had been working on the ground there, large numbers of its staff and their families were at extraordinary risk. The JRS International Office sought our assistance. We responded with advocacy and assistance with visa processes, though progress has been slow.

On behalf of the Board and all at JRS Australia, I conclude with warm thanks, for your wonderful support. Without it, JRS could not so effectively continue its mission to accompany, serve and advocate for those seeking safety who are so often sadly marginalised in our country. God will reward you, having promised that even the simplest help given to others is accepted as given to Jesus.

**Annette Cunliffe RSC**  
**Chair of the Board, JRS Australia**





I am honoured to follow Sr Annette Cunliffe in providing introductory remarks to our 2021 annual report, outlining the achievements and challenges faced by JRS Australia, our wonderful supporters and partners, and all whom we serve over an

extraordinary and tumultuous year.

Before all else, I extend warmest thanks to Sr Annette, on behalf of all of us at JRS, for her exceptional leadership as Chair of the JRS Australia Board since 2015, preceded by 3 years as a Board Director. Annette will be retiring as Chair in June 2022, leaving a tremendous legacy. With her wise counsel and unwavering support, she has guided and encouraged us through difficult times and celebrated with us every step of progress, small and large. She has served us with love and dedication and we are stronger and eternally grateful for it.

I reflect back on our provision of accompaniment, services and advocacy for and with refugees, people seeking asylum and migrants in situations of vulnerability during 2021 with a combination of gratitude, pride and awe.

We bore witness to terrible suffering, with the rolling impacts of COVID-19, strict lockdown measures, a marked spike in sexual and gender-based violence, and the tragic developments in Afghanistan, Myanmar and other conflict-ravaged countries world-wide, with devastating impact upon diaspora communities in Australia.

Consequently, across 2021, we faced an unprecedented demand for our services, with notable increases in the volume of referrals received, the severity of presenting circumstances, and the complexity of our operating environment. Those whom we serve were largely excluded from receiving Federal Government COVID-19 support packages.

Amidst these challenges we have dug deep and innovated, pivoting between face-to-face, remote and hybrid operations, scaling and containing services in response to fluctuating financial and resource capabilities, and triaging to ensure that we maintained our focus upon working with people in situations of greatest vulnerability, who may not be able to avail themselves of other supports.

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In response to the situation in Afghanistan, we proudly joined with faith-based and secular partners to galvanise behind diaspora leaders who developed and informed campaign messages to urge a more compassionate Australian Government response.

Across the year, I know we have at times all yearned to do more for those who are less safe than we are, and sometimes felt pained by our human limitations. And yet, countless everyday acts of generosity have combined to deliver tremendous results, and real felt benefits, for those whom we serve. The details are contained in this report. We are so grateful for the myriad gifts of time, talent, financial and material resources bestowed by our wonderful volunteers, other supporters and partners across this last, tough year. Together we truly can triumph through adversity.

Over 2021 we farewell Caseworker Maegan Williams, Communications Coordinator Anne Rutherford, and Schools Engagement Coordinator Anne Nesbitt. We thank them for their service and

# 6 director's address

wish them all the best in their next life chapter. We are indebted in particular to Anne Nesbitt, who led our engagement with schools with tireless energy and distinction. We also welcomed a number of talented new staff members, named below, and many wonderful new volunteers. My warmest thanks to all at team JRS – staff, Board and volunteers – who work tirelessly to sustain our operations through thick and thin, with compassion and resolve. You are too numerous to name here, but a special thanks goes to Assistant Country Director Maeve Brown, whose steady leadership, expertise and commitment are powerful and constant enablers of the results set out in this report.

As I write, Australians have just delivered a Federal election result that provides, amongst other things, a resounding endorsement for a more compassionate response to people seeking asylum and refugees, including an anticipated end to temporary protection and greater prospects of family reunification for many who have endured years of enforced separation from loved ones.

There is much collaborative work ahead to deliver upon this promise and we look to the future with hope and resolve.

Warmest thanks as ever for journeying with us,

**Tamara Domicelj**

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*Students from Delany College celebrating Multicultural Day after hearing powerful stories from JRS Australia Leaders.*



## Highlights from 2021

### Services and Accompaniment

- JRS Australia served over **3000** people seeking asylum, refugees and migrants in vulnerable situations.
- JRS Australia provided **29,813** instances of service, nearly a **140%** increase from 2020.



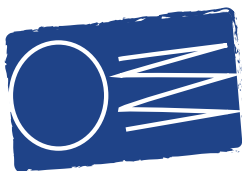
- JRS Australia delivered over **15,000** food parcels to, on average, **300** households per week.

- JRS Australia provided **1141** people with **9771** instances of specialist casework support, including support to address housing and homelessness, physical health, mental health crises, emergency financial relief, and more.

- JRS Australia supported **334** women at-risk of or who have experienced Sexual and Gender Based Violence (SGBV) through the Finding Safety Project & Women's Space. This includes **3264** instances of service. Over the year, we supported **11** women to become community mobilisers, providing information and support to their peers.



- JRS Australia assisted **117** people through the Employment Program, providing clients with job readiness skills including resume building, interview workshops, and job opportunities.



- JRS Australia assisted **707** people to complete NSW Opal Card concession applications, ensuring access to discounted transport.

- JRS Australia ran **3** sets of COVID-19 vaccination clinics in partnership with Western Sydney Local Health District, allowing **250** people to be vaccinated.
- Nearly 300 dedicated volunteers donated **11,000** hours of service, accompaniment, and advocacy for those in need.

### Advocacy



- JRS Australia led or participated in **41** meetings with federal, state, and local government decision-makers.

- Through the JRS Australia Leadership Program, **19** leaders with lived experience of forced displacement led, contributed to, or participated

in **256** unique instances of advocacy and public education. This included speaking to schools and parishes, lobbying politicians, engaging with the media, participating on advisory committees, and organising within their own communities.

- JRS Australia's advocacy work secured over **50** media mentions, highlighting many of the challenges faced by the people we serve including housing exclusion, the impacts of refugee policy, and barriers to accessing COVID-19 vaccines.



- JRS Australia collaborated with **10** social justice groups to run **35** actions across Sydney. This included meetings with **7** parliamentarians.



- JRS Australia co-produced a research report on housing exclusion experienced by people seeking asylum, a parliamentary submission on family reunion pathways and **5** assorted policy briefs.

- JRS Australia partnered with **78** schools throughout the year, engaging **3015** school students through the Refugee Voices program and resulting in **47** Food Bank drives.





# 8 voices of leadership



*Participants from the JRS Australia Leadership Program attended a workshop hosted by Anglicare on how to register an NGO in NSW and provide efficient support to their communities.*

**A**t the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, people seeking asylum, refugees, and migrants in vulnerable situations confronted immense obstacles and setbacks. The last year has seen profound challenges and deep tragedy that has struck the hearts of so many. In times like these, leadership manifests itself in myriad ways and it has been our privilege to champion the voices of refugee leaders and work hand in hand with them as they support their communities through severe adversity.

The JRS Australia Leadership Program aims to develop leadership and public engagement skills with beneficiaries of our services. This includes public speaking events at schools and in wider community settings, participating in public forums, providing testimony and expertise at Parliamentary inquiries, campaigning, and much more. The Leadership Program helps to support people with lived experience of forced displacement to become effective, independent, and confident advocates for their communities and speak on issues that affect them most.

The Leadership Program worked alongside 19 community leaders across a range of activities. During the last COVID-19 lockdown, community leaders played a major role in facilitating the JRS Australia COVID-19 vaccine clinics. Over 250 individuals from refugee and asylum-seeking communities received

two vaccination doses as part of Western Sydney Local Health District's outreach program to reach people in situations of vulnerability.

In August 2021, when Kabul fell to the Taliban, leaders from the Afghan community and supporters from JRS Australia met with their local politicians to raise community concerns and bring light to the ongoing human rights violations happening abroad. The Leadership Program assisted Hazara community leaders to organise a national rally at Parliament House to end Temporary Protection Visas (TPVs) and Safe Haven Enterprise Visas (SHEVs). Over 3000 people from across the country gathered in Canberra and garnered mainstream media engagement.

Leaders with lived experience inform and engage with many aspects of JRS Australia's work – ranging from participating on the Advisory Committee of our Finding Safety Project that supports women on temporary visas who are at-risk of or experiencing SGBV, to joining delegations meeting with parliamentarians, to providing insight to the media on experiences of housing and homelessness faced by people seeking asylum.

It has been an incredible privilege to support our network of leaders in becoming powerful advocates who are able to share their perspectives, support their communities and access platforms to speak out safely and confidently.





*Zaki Haidari, Leadership Coordinator presenting to students at St Andrews Catholic College in Marayong.*

## Maryam S

Coming from a refugee background myself, I always wanted to become a voice for the voiceless and vulnerable people. I have experienced many hardships and discrimination but I didn't have a platform to express my anger and advocate for a positive change. The JRS Australia Leadership program has provided me the platform to advocate for myself and other refugees. I have suffered too much and I don't want to see other refugees and people seeking asylum go through the same journey. I want to raise awareness and make a positive change.

Since working with the Leadership program, I have gained confidence to speak publicly and raise awareness about the issues that people seeking asylum and refugees are facing on a daily basis. I'm very proud of myself that I can advocate for the rights of the refugees and people seeking asylum.

## Magdalene

I was a sports journalist back in my home country and I was often in public, producing reports and talking to people. Since coming to Australia, I have missed my job and public engagement. I really enjoy working with the JRS Australia Leadership Program as it provides me the opportunity to speak in public and with the media. Working with the Leadership Program has increased my public speaking skills in a new country. I have done many public speaking events in many public forums and schools to diverse groups of people. In my home country I only reported and

engaged with my nationality but the work with JRS has provided me the opportunity to speak with a very diverse group of people, of different nationalities and different ages.

Sharing my story is very personal but I always feel safe because I'm supported, and people respect me and listen to me very respectfully which motivates me to keep fighting for the rights of refugees and people seeking asylum.

JRS organised my first interview with an Australian journalist, and I shared my story about my previous work. We connected immediately after the interview because we share the same passion. We are close friends now and they provided me with a support letter to submit with my visa application. I feel more confident now and more connected.



*Magdalene, community leader with lived experience presenting at the Diocesan Leaders gathering.*

# 10 services

## Casework and Emergency Relief



*JRS Australia hosted one of the first COVID-19 vaccine clinics for refugees, people seeking asylum, and migrants in vulnerable situations run in partnership with Western Sydney Local Health District and NSW Health.*

The JRS Australia Casework Team continued to witness the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the people we serve as Australia adjusted to the reality of lockdowns, job losses, isolation, and uncertainty. The Casework Team supported over 1100 people in 2021, through nearly 10,000 instances of service, including over 1350 emergency relief and ongoing payments. This dramatic increase in the number of casework sessions, emergency relief payments, and information/referrals shows how much more complex and intractable many people's situations have become.

People seeking asylum and other temporary visa holders continued to face huge challenges throughout 2021 in the areas of financial security, employment, social engagement, and accessing appropriate medical care. Extended delays with resolution of immigration matters and restrictive visas left many

people in limbo, in what was already an exceptionally difficult period.

As COVID-19 impacted countless businesses and strict and lengthy lockdown measures were imposed, many JRS Australia clients lost work and had no access to Federal government support. During this time JRS Australia and other services also had to adapt to working remotely throughout the lockdown period, with the Casework team limiting most contact with clients to phone calls and email.

Many JRS Australia clients contacted our service when they or their family members were isolating with COVID-19, with little to no access to food and limited access to information on where to access support during isolation. The Casework team continued to refer clients internally to our Foodbank team and relied on partnerships with local community centres, local councils, food rescue charities, NSW Health, and the local police to ensure that people had access to adequate food.

The harsh lockdowns and the rapid spread of the COVID-19 Delta variant in South West and Western Sydney made access to vaccinations for people seeking asylum and temporary migrants, particularly those with significant health issues, without valid ID or without access to Medicare, incredibly important.

From June - September 2021, JRS Australia was able to partner with Western Sydney Local Health District (WSLHD) to run 3 sets of vaccination clinics, held at St Patrick's Cathedral Hall in Parramatta. JRS Australia was able to facilitate access to vaccines in a safe and familiar environment, as well as provide access to interpreters, allowing roughly 250 people to receive both doses of the Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine.

These clinics were further supported by JRS volunteers who were double vaccinated and who lived in the Parramatta area or who obtained travel permits to enter the LGA, which was an LGA of concern at the time. JRS was also able to partner with the City of Parramatta Council which provided Council staff to support with the check-in/registration of vaccination clients on the day of the clinics. JRS is also grateful to St Vincent's Hospital Sydney who were able to donate N95 masks, face shields, sanitiser and other PPE to ensure staff and volunteer safety.

Unfortunately, the Casework team also needed to respond to many acute mental health crises as clients regularly identified feelings of helplessness, hopelessness, and depression. The lockdowns meant that some clients experienced even stronger social isolation compounded by prolonged separation from family and almost no prospect of family reunion.

Housing and homelessness were significant issues in 2021, with the Casework team responding to many clients experiencing primary or secondary homelessness and countless referrals for people facing eviction or with significant rental arrears. Accommodation services remained under significant stress as they adapted to lockdowns and unfortunately the people we serve continued to be excluded from accessing emergency and longer-term housing support due to their visa status.

However, during this period of significant challenges, we were able to pilot a temporary housing placement for a family through Evolve Housing, with the hope that we may be able to replicate this program in 2022.

Many people were also released from immigration detention during this period and while this was welcome news, it meant that people were moving into the community without housing and a financial safety net during a pandemic. JRS Australia was able to partner with the Asylum Seeker Resource Centre to assist those recently released from detention with financial payments to prevent homelessness

## Foodbank



*JRS Australia staff with volunteers from St Joseph's Catholic Parish, Kingswood dropping off food donations at the Parramatta office. In 2021, JRS Australia served over 300 families every week.*

Food security remained an ongoing issue in 2021 and once again, the JRS Australia Foodbank Program had to shift and adapt to the presenting needs of the people we serve, whilst maintaining strict COVID-19 safety precautions. After upscaling food deliveries significantly in the previous year, the need for food remained consistent in early 2021 with deliveries being made to approximately 350 households every week. However, as the Delta outbreak emerged and as lockdown restrictions increased, JRS Australia was able to shift from food deliveries to emergency relief payments with the provision of funding by Multicultural NSW and support from the Australian Red Cross. Emergency food parcels were made possible by Foodbank NSW and face-to-face pick-ups were facilitated by the OzHarvest Food Hub in Granville.

## Food security remained an ongoing issue in 2021 and once again, the JRS Australia Foodbank Program had to shift and adapt to the presenting needs of the people we serve...

While it was an incredibly difficult and uncertain period for JRS Australia Foodbank clients, staff, and volunteers, the lockdown period allowed the Foodbank Support Workers to review processes and systems and to check-in with each household to better understand what food and household items were most needed. As a result, the Foodbank Program has developed a tailored packing list that meets the dietary needs of the people we serve, reduces food waste, and can be given to schools, parishes and communities to ensure that donated items best meet the needs of the people we serve.

At the same time, JRS Australia has formed and strengthened partnerships with Parramatta Mission, Karabi Community Centre, the JSS Food Shop, along with the Asylum Seekers Centre and the House of Welcome, to redistribute surplus food items and to avoid service duplication.

JRS Australia was also able to partner with the City of Parramatta Council as lockdown restrictions eased,



# 12 services

allowing us to restart our Foodbank deliveries. Council staff volunteered over a number of weeks as delivery drivers, which allowed us time to re-engage previous JRS Australia volunteers after they had been fully vaccinated.

JRS Australia will continue to work with key stakeholders to address the issue of access to food, work rights and a financial safety net, particularly during periods of crisis for people seeking asylum and migrants in situations of great vulnerability.

## Employment Program



*Tamana Mirzada, Employment Coordinator, Zaki Haidari, Employment Support Worker & Leadership Coordinator, and Maeve Brown, Assistant Country Director.*

The JRS Australia Employment Program continues to provide support to refugees, people seeking asylum, and temporary visa holders navigating the Australian employment market with the aim of finding meaningful work. The program provides support for work readiness skills including resume and cover letter writing, job searching, interview preparation and facilitates awareness of employment rights and responsibilities.

Despite great uncertainty, the program was able to continue to provide assistance in this challenging time.

In 2021, through collaboration with employers, social enterprises, small businesses, and other relevant stakeholders, the program organised placement opportunities for job, volunteer, and internship training to enhance capacity and build relationships with partners. This involved implementing a holistic and client-led approach where participants were provided with extensive one-on-one support from the initial consultation to ongoing guidance and support post-employment placement.

In the first half of 2021, the JRS Australia Employment Program was primarily delivered face-to-face but then shifted to a hybrid and remote work model as the arrival of the Delta variant became a great concern. Harsh lockdown restrictions, particularly in Western Sydney within the LGA's of concern, not only impacted engagement in the program, but also meant that many participants who had found work lost shifts or became unemployed.

Many of those supported by JRS Australia, worked casually or part-time in the industries hardest hit by lockdown restrictions, including hospitality and retail. Finding any work was difficult, thus increasing the need for emergency financial assistance. Outside of NSW COVID-19 Disaster Payments, many of those we serve remained ineligible for any government assistance and did not have access to a financial safety net.

In addition to the challenges posed by COVID-19, many of the barriers to finding employment for people seeking asylum and temporary visa holders remained, including: a lack of local experience or locally recognised qualifications, language barriers, and no access to an electronic device or sufficient data to engage in remote employment support.

Accessing affordable childcare for single parent-headed households was another significant challenge affecting the capacity to look for work, particularly for women. In addition, securing permanent work has been a great struggle for those on short-term bridging visas, as preference is often given to Australian citizens and permanent residents.

Despite great uncertainty, the program was able to continue to provide assistance in this challenging time. Through the recruitment of volunteers and

mentors, the Employment Program expanded its capacity and had a total of 117 people registered for employment support. Over 200 work readiness sessions were conducted throughout the year.

To address the digital divide further exacerbated by COVID-19, JRS Australia created a technology bank for refugees, people seeking asylum and migrants in vulnerable situations. Over 80 devices were distributed to the people we serve to ensure they had access to work and training opportunities and a chance to stay socially connected during such an isolating time.

Even with the limited opportunities to organise face-to-face training, the Employment Program supported 17 participants in gaining accredited qualifications and licences for construction work, security, and forklift driving. In order to strengthen sector capacity, JRS Australia has also taken the lead in convening the Asylum Seeker Employment Interagency in Greater Sydney and worked in partnership with specialist service providers across the broader community, and coordinated information on opportunities for training, education, and employment. We hope to continue to work in partnership with the community to offer more training opportunities so that the people we serve can find or return to meaningful work.



*JRS Australia Employment Program clients undertook barista training with the team at The Little Marionette. We are grateful that small businesses are helping train and empower refugees and people seeking asylum to find pathways to meaningful work.*

## Volunteers



*Wayne, a JRS Australia Volunteer, delivering a truck-full of essential items, supplied by the Dandelion Support Network, to a family with a newborn baby.*

It was another challenging year for our dedicated volunteer team. The first half of the year was business as usual, and as busy as usual, as more than 75 volunteers per week supported JRS Australia in a number of face-to-face roles, including reception, food hamper packing, dispatch coordination, food deliveries, donation collections and other ad hoc tasks.

**For the first time since the pandemic began JRS Australia had to close the office and cease all face-to-face services, including all volunteering.**

The need continued to increase and so did our team as we worked hard to keep up with demand. The community around us continued to show outstanding support as new volunteers joined our team every week. We were also excited to finally welcome back our older volunteers who had to pause volunteering in 2020 due to COVID-19 restrictions. Many were keen to return to volunteering and shifted seamlessly back into the team.

As Australia confronted the Delta outbreak, volunteering shifted dramatically. For the first time since the pandemic began JRS Australia had to close the office and cease all face-to-face services, including all volunteering. However, this pause had a silver lining for our volunteer team. The break from

# 14 services

normal activities allowed us to explore new ways of working, develop new opportunities for our volunteers to support the JRS Australia team, and increase capacity across the organisation. As always, our amazing volunteers were willing and able to jump into action, learning new skills and stepping up in new and diverse ways. We worked with different teams across JRS Australia to develop remote volunteer opportunities to support our staff with their increased workload. We created three new remote volunteer roles to support the Casework and Employment teams: Intake Support Volunteer, Opal Assist Volunteer and Employment Support Volunteer.

Our volunteers also assisted with COVID-19 Vaccination Clinics, hosted by JRS Australia in partnership with Western Sydney Local Health District and NSW Health, to ensure as many of our clients as possible were vaccinated against COVID-19.

Finally, in late September, we were able slowly and cautiously to resume some of our face-to-face volunteering, and our volunteers were back on board assisting with food deliveries, with the help of volunteers from the City of Parramatta Council. By December the number of food deliveries had increased again, along with requests for baby items sourced through Dandelion Support Network and clothing sourced through Thread Together, all picked up and delivered entirely by JRS volunteers.

Our volunteers have continued to go above and beyond to support JRS Australia and the people we serve through a very challenging year.

Our volunteers have continued to go above and beyond to support JRS Australia and the people we serve through a very challenging year. They have been keen to adapt and learn new roles and skills, and to connect with our clients and the team in different ways. We are extremely lucky to have their loyal support!



*JRS Australia staff and volunteers from City of Parramatta Council packing Foodbank NSW boxes into delivery cars.*



*Donations from Our Lady of Dolours Catholic Parish, Chatswood.*



Despite the ongoing challenges presented by COVID-19, the Finding Safety Project was able to support over 300 women in 2021 through over 3000 instances of service, including over 250 emergency relief payments and over 260 women participating in group activities, information sessions, training and workshops.

In the first few months of 2021, the Finding Safety Project was able to run a number of workshops both online and face-to-face, including our first online empowerment workshop for the year, “*Keeping Safe and Connected Online during COVID-19*”. This IT workshop aimed at equipping women with the skills and confidence to use online conferencing and video platforms such as Zoom and Facebook Messenger for video calls and more.

While many of the planned activities for the year had to be delayed or cancelled due to COVID-19 restrictions and periods of extended lockdown, the Finding Safety Team was able to run a number of social activities for women that combined opportunities to reduce social isolation with information sharing. JRS Australia partnered with House of Welcome's Creative Hub for a 2-week sewing group, teaching women how to sew their own reusable masks and International Women's Day was celebrated in March with approximately 30 women seeking asylum, refugees and temporary visa holders attending.

In the first half of 2021, the Finding Safety Team continued to focus on women's leadership and capacity building, and was able to recruit and train



*In celebration of International Women's Day, JRS Australia Finding Safety clients created an art installation called 'Her Garden'. The aim was to symbolically sow the seeds of hope for a better tomorrow. Everyone present used their palm prints to create 'flowers' on which they wrote messages of empowerment and strength. The flowers were then planted together, creating a garden full of colour and positivity.*

# 16 women's space

The women all have lived experience of forced displacement and are driven to play a role in raising awareness about violence against women, women's rights and supports to create safety for all women and children.

groups of inspiring women as community mobilisers. The women all have lived experience of forced displacement and are driven to play a role in raising awareness about violence against women, women's rights and supports to create safety for all women and children. Community mobiliser training aims to equip women with leadership skills and knowledge so they can inform and support other women within their communities.

The JRS Australia Finding Safety Team also worked with key partners to deliver sector development training throughout the year. JRS Australia worked in partnership with Refugee Advice and Casework Service (RACS) and Immigration Advice and Rights Centre (IARC) to run a sector development webinar entitled, *"Collaborative approaches to supporting women survivors seeking asylum"*. The session was attended by 30 professionals from across the community, migrant, health, legal, and housing sectors. In June, the Finding Safety Project also hosted a best practice forum to showcase our learnings from the 3-year period of Women NSW Innovation Funding. We were honoured to have three Women's Space casework clients join to share their stories and describe the impact that the project has had on their lives and discuss the barriers they faced in trying to access mainstream services and support due to their bridging or temporary visa status.

The Finding Safety Project continued to address key issues faced by women on temporary visas, including meeting with Shadow Minister for Women, Senator Jenny McAllister. In partnership with Good Shepherd, Salvation Army, Uniting NSW.ACT, and Uniting Church of Australia, we were able to raise our concerns about current policies and how they work to keep women

on temporary visas locked in situations of risk and ongoing harm.

One of the most powerful sessions conducted in 2021, was held in the lead up to the 16 Days of Activism to Eliminate Violence Against Women. The Finding Safety team convened an online sector development webinar entitled, *"I don't want the relationship to end, I want the violence to stop."* This training was co-facilitated with IARC, and attended by over 35 community workers, DFV specialists, legal professionals, advocates, and volunteers. The webinar addressed supporting women survivors of sexual and gender-based violence on temporary visas to create safety in complex situations.

The Finding Safety Project continues to report an increase in demand for services and support, with financial and housing assistance remaining the most common presenting needs, especially for women who have fled DFV and have no source of income. Without a financial safety net, women often stay in situations of violence. Accessing ongoing financial support and long-term housing remain key barriers to safety for women seeking asylum and women temporary visa holders. The Finding Safety Team plans to continue to look for new ways to address these issues.





*In 2021, JRS Australia led 12 delegations of Catholic community members in key electorate areas to meet with Parliamentarians to share their concerns on the situation in Afghanistan.*

## Overview

JRS Australia's advocacy work has always aimed to reflect and promote solutions to the greatest challenges faced by refugees, people seeking asylum and migrants in vulnerable situations. Our advocacy is informed by the data and observations arising from our services and accompaniment, and by the perspectives and priorities of diaspora leaders with whom we work. Throughout 2021, those whom we serve were confronted with extreme challenges and tragedies.

JRS Australia made a submission to the Senate Standing Committee on Legal and Constitutional Affairs inquiry into the 'Efficacy, fairness, timeliness, and costs of the processing and granting of visa classes which provide for or allow for family and partner reunions.' This submission focused on the denial of eligibility for and access to family reunion for people seeking asylum and refugees in Australia. It highlighted the ways in which the Australian Government's family reunion policies prolong family separation and exacerbate its negative impacts. This submission provided perspectives and stories from refugees from the Asia-Pacific region.

In collaboration with St Vincent de Paul, JRS Australia produced 5 policy briefs outlining access to family reunion pathways, a safety net for refugees and people seeking asylum, an end to offshore processing, a fair refugee status determination process, and permanent protection for all refugees in Australia.

The last year also saw the publication and launch of 'A Place to Call Home: A Report on the Experiences of Homelessness and Housing Exclusion among People Seeking Asylum in Greater Sydney'. This report draws upon research conducted by JRS Australia and Western Sydney University, with support from the Mercy Foundation and Life Without Barriers. Detailing participants' housing trajectories, living arrangements and conditions, and challenges with finding and maintaining safe, secure, and adequate housing, A Place to Call Home explores how restrictions on economic and social rights associated with visa status, barriers to employment in competitive labour markets, and Sydney's high rental prices generate conditions under which homelessness and housing exclusion become a feature of the lives of people seeking asylum.



# 18 advocacy



This research represents an initial step in developing a more appropriate response to the homelessness and housing exclusion faced by people seeking asylum in Australia and garnered coverage by the Vatican News, Guardian Australia and national Catholic media.

In July 2021 we welcomed the NSW Government's announcement that a further \$6 million in emergency assistance would be made available to support people seeking asylum and other temporary visa holders in situations of vulnerability across the state.

And were pleased to host one of the first COVID-19 Vaccination Clinics in partnership with Western Sydney Local Health District's outreach program to reach people in situations of vulnerability. More than 250 individuals were able to receive both COVID-19 doses. Community leaders from the JRS Australia Leadership program played a major role in mobilising their communities to get vaccinated to keep themselves and their community safe.

Central to our approach is ensuring that people with lived experience of forced displacement play a key leading role in all aspects of our advocacy work and are provided with a safe platform to share their expertise, experience, and perspectives.

Our volunteers have continued to go above and beyond to support JRS Australia and the people we serve through a very challenging year.

Leaders with lived experience of forced displacement led, contributed to, and participated in 256 unique instances of advocacy and public education. This included speaking to politicians, media, schools, parishes, providing guidance on advisory committees, and organising and leading within their own communities.

JRS Australia led and collaborated with 10 social justice groups to run 35 actions across Sydney. In 2021 our community groups led or participated in over 40 meetings with federal, state, and local government decision-makers. Community groups organised key advocacy campaigns for access to Early Childhood Education Care (ECEC) for families on temporary visas targeted towards local councils.

## Action For Afghanistan

As Kabul fell to the Taliban in August 2021, our advocacy efforts shifted dramatically to the tragedy at hand. It began with a clarion call from Arif Hussein, Human Rights Lawyer at the Refugee Advice and Casework Service (RACS) and Zaki Haidari, Leadership Coordinator at JRS Australia, in the Sydney Morning Herald (SMH), on 15 August 2022.



JRS Australia staff and supporters joining the Action for Afghanistan campaign.

Led by Afghanistan diaspora leaders, JRS Australia joined other faith-based and civil society partners, and veteran groups in a range of campaign efforts, including the Action for Afghanistan campaign and the Christians United for Afghanistan campaign.

Over 190,000 Australians signed the #ActionForAfghanistan petition calling for an additional intake of 20,000 humanitarian visas for people from Afghanistan, pathways to permanent protection for those on temporary protection visas, prioritising family reunification and lifting the ban on resettlement for those in Indonesia.

JRS Australia supported leaders from the Afghan diaspora to engage with media outlets such as Eureka Street, Junkee Media, Guardian Australia, SMH, Women's Agenda, Catholic Outlook and more.

JRS Australia is proud to have played a role in accompanying the diaspora on this advocacy journey, working closely with Catholic leaders across the country to engage their parliamentarians on the issues, and in advocating directly to Ministers, Shadow Ministers, and parliamentarians through our role as Co-Chairs with Jesuit Social Services of the Catholic Alliance for People Seeking Asylum (CAPSA).

Our work with CAPSA catalysed major support nationally resulting in over 600 Catholic leaders including nuns, congregational leaders, priests, school principals, teachers, parish pastoral council members and social justice members, Diocesan representatives, CEOs, and prominent local business people signing letters addressed to Prime Minister Scott Morrison and key Government MPs across Australia urging for action. Additionally, CAPSA organised meetings with both Government and Opposition leaders.

A range of Catholic agencies are key organising partners in the Christians United for Afghanistan campaign, through which thousands of Christians and hundreds of local churches joined the call for more compassion and leadership for people from Afghanistan. JRS Australia led 12 delegations of Catholic community members in key electorate areas to meet with Parliamentarians to share their concerns on the situation in Afghanistan.

## Schools Engagement Program



*Students from Xavier Catholic College receive JRS Australia Youth Awards for producing a multimedia project that explores the challenges faced by refugees and people seeking asylum.*

In 2021, JRS Australia continued to work with Jesuit, Catholic and independent schools to raise awareness about 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'). In response

**2540 students learned about the global context regarding refugees and the work JRS does to support and walk alongside those who have experienced forced displacement.**

to COVID-19 lockdowns, JRS Australia adapted to engage with schools via online platforms. A total of 475 students heard speakers with lived experience share their story via the Refugee Voices program and 2540 students learned about the global context regarding refugees and the work JRS does to support and walk alongside those who have experienced forced displacement. We were delighted that 47 schools answered our call for food bank donations across the year.

During 2021, the School program expanded by 30% to a total of 78 schools partnering with JRS. Following presentations, interested students approached JRS

# 20 advocacy



*Students from Xavier Catholic College organised a 'Circle of Silence' as part of Refugee Week.*

seeking involvement in our community organising activities and were invited to attend electorate meetings, in the location of their school or place of residence. A total of 14 students from different schools attended zoom meetings involving the presentation to Members of Parliament of letters signed by numerous Catholic leaders from within the electorate requesting greater support from the Australian Government for the people of Afghanistan, both in Australia and in Afghanistan. Members of Parliament were urged to forward the letters to the Minister for Immigration, Citizenship, Migrant Services and Multicultural Affairs.

Students also initiated and authored a letter to the Minister expressing solidarity and concern for high school students like themselves who are denied access to education in Afghanistan. The students

urged the Australian government to grant protection to students who have been denied education and forced into unsafe activity. Over 2000 students in five states signed the letter in just a few weeks, and ten students met and prepared for a requested meeting with the Minister.

To mark Refugee Week, several Jesuit schools recognised and celebrated the contributions of refugees and people seeking asylum through a range of initiatives. These included hearing from refugee leaders about their stories, organising a Circle of Silence to show solidarity, running fundraising events, and enacting a safe detention simulation experience - 'The Cage'.

## **The Bookends Project**

The Bookends Project is an initiative of the Society of Jesus Australia, in which JRS has participated. The Project refers to two 'bookends of rejection' that mark Australian history, namely the treatment of Indigenous Australians and of forcibly displaced people. During 2021, the Bookends Project continued to host Chats for Change with the Cardoner Project, with leaders with lived experience sharing their story followed by an open and respectful dialogue amongst participants as they come to understand their own relationship with these two groups.

To mark Refugee Week, several Jesuit schools recognised and celebrated the contributions of refugees and people seeking asylum through a range of initiatives.



# acknowledgements



## **We offer heartfelt thanks to our grant providers and major supporters:**

- Antipodean Family Foundation
- Asylum Seeker Resource Centre (ASRC)
- Australia Post
- Australian Communities Foundation
- Australian Red Cross
- Cath Leary Foundation
- Catholic Church Insurance
- City of Parramatta Council Capacity Building Grants
- City of Sydney Community Services Grants
- Cumberland City Council Community Grants
- Department of Communities and Justice - Social Sector Support Fund
- Hogan Family Foundation
- KPMG
- Life Without Barriers
- Limb Family Foundation
- Magnolia Foundation
- Mercy Foundation
- Multicultural NSW
- Noel and Carmel O'Brien Foundation
- Our Lady of the Way Parish
- PAYCE Foundation
- Planet Wheeler Foundation
- Scanlon Foundation
- Sisters of Charity Foundation
- Sisters of the Good Samaritan Foundation
- Sisters of Mercy Parramatta
- Sisters of St John of God
- St Michael's Fund
- The Australian Province of the Society of Jesus
- The Catholic Archdiocese of Sydney
- The Catholic Diocese of 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 including:**

- Access Disability Services
- Addison Road Community Centre
- All Saints Catholic Parish Liverpool
- All Saints Catholic College Liverpool
- Anglicare

- Anti-Slavery Australia
- Asia Pacific Refugee Rights Network (APRRN)
- Asia Pacific Network on Refugees (APNOR)
- Asylum Seekers Centre
- Australian Catholic Bishops Conference
- Australian Catholic University
- Australian Dental Association - Filling the Gap
- Australian National Committee on Refugee Women (ANCORW)
- Australian Women against Violence Alliance (AWAVA)
- Baker & McKenzie
- Barilla Ltd.
- Blue Mountains Refugee Support Group (BMRSG)
- Bronte Public School
- Brigidine Asylum Seeker Project (BASP)
- Canterbury-Bankstown LGA
- Carroll & O'Dea
- Catherine McAuley College
- Catholic Alliance for People Seeking Asylum (CAPSA) Catholic Bishops Conference PNG
- Catholic Education Diocese of Parramatta
- Catholic Parish of Lindfield-Killara
- Catholic Religious Australia (CRA)
- Catholic Mission
- Catholic Social Justice Council
- Catholic Social Services Australia
- Catholic Social Services Victoria
- Christ the King Catholic Parish, North Rocks
- City East College
- Colin Biggers & Paisley
- Community Incorporate
- D'Ambra Murphy Lawyers
- Dandelion Support Network
- De La Salle Catholic High School, Cronulla
- Domestic Violence Service Management (DVSM)
- Domestic Violence NSW
- Dominican Sisters of Eastern Australia and Solomon Islands
- End Child Detention Coalition (ECDC)
- The Executive Coach
- Five Dock Public School
- Foodbank NSW/ACT
- Forced Migration Network, University of New South Wales
- Frenchs Forest Catholic Parish
- Freyssinet Australia
- Glow Up Careers
- Good Shepherd
- Good Shepherd Parish, Plumpton
- Grandmothers Against Detention of Refugee Children NSW
- Grantham Heights Uniting Church, Seven Hills
- Harris Farm Markets
- Hazara Women of Australia
- Holroyd/Parramatta Mobile Minders
- Holy Family Catholic Parish, Emerton
- Holy Name of Mary Catholic Parish, Hunters Hill
- Holy Name of Mary Catholic Parish, Rydalmere
- Holy Spirit Catholic Parish, Carnes Hill
- Holy Spirit Catholic Parish, St Clair
- HOST International
- House of Welcome
- House of Sadaqa
- Humanitarian and Development Research Initiative (HADRI)
- Humans Like Us
- Information & Cultural Exchange
- Insight Exchange
- Islamic Relief Australia
- Jesuit Asia Pacific Conference (JCAP)
- Jesuit Communications
- Jesuit Education Australia
- Jesuit Mission
- Jesuit Social Services
- JRS Asia Pacific
- Karabi Community & Development Services
- Kingz Containers
- La Trobe University
- Legal Aid NSW
- Loreto Kirribilli
- Licenses4Work
- Life Without Barriers
- Marian Catholic College, Kenthurst
- Marist Brothers of Australia
- Mary's House
- Mater Hospital, North Sydney
- Mercy Catholic College, Chatswood
- Metro Assist
- Micah Australia
- Monte Sant' Angelo Mercy College, North Sydney

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- Mother Teresa Catholic Primary, Westmead
- Mums 4 Refugees
- Mummies Paying It Forward
- Nappy Collective
- National Zakat Foundation
- Nangami Peace and Justice Group
- Nexxt- Disability Services Australia
- Newman College, University of Melbourne
- NSW Refugee Health Service
- OneSight
- Our Lady of Dolours Parish, Chatswood
- Our Lady of Lourdes Parish, Seven Hills
- Our Lady of Lourdes Catholic Parish, Baulkham Hills
- Our Lady of Lourdes Catholic Parish, Seven Hills
- Our Lady of Mercy College, Parramatta
- Our Lady of the Angels Catholic Parish, Rouse Hill
- Our Lady of the Rosary, Kensington
- Our Lady of the Way Catholic Parish, Emu Plains
- Our Lady of the Way Catholic Parish, North Sydney
- Our Lady Queen of Peace Catholic Parish, Greystanes
- Oz Harvest
- Parliament on King
- Parramatta Catholic Education Office
- Parramatta Marist High School
- Parramatta Mission
- Parramatta Women's Shelter
- Prosper
- Peter McMullin Centre on Statelessness, Melbourne Law School
- Refugee and Casework Support Service (RACS)
- Refugee Council of Australia
- Regional Opportunities Australia
- Richmond Uniting Church
- Sacred Heart Catholic 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
- St Anthony's Catholic Parish, Marsfield
- St Anthony of Padua Catholic Parish, Toongabbie
- St Aloysius College, North Sydney
- St Aloysius of Gonzaga Catholic Parish, Cronulla
- St Ambrose Church, Concord West
- St Ambrose Catholic Primary School, Toongabbie
- St Canice's Catholic 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. Gerard Majella Catholic Church, Carlingford
- St Joachim's Catholic Parish, Lidcombe
- St John Bosco Catholic Parish, Engadine
- St John XXIII Catholic Parish, Glenwood-Stanhope Gardens
- St Joseph's Catholic Parish, Kingswood
- St Joseph's Catholic Parish, Moorebank
- St Ignatius' College Riverview
- St Leo's Catholic College, Wahroonga
- St Luke's Catholic College, Marsden Park
- St Kevin's Catholic Parish, Eastwood
- St Madeleine Sophie Barat Catholic Parish, Kenthurst
- St Mark's Catholic College, Stanhope Gardens
- St Mary's Catholic Parish, Concord
- St Mary's Catholic Primary School, North Sydney
- St Mary Magdalene's Catholic Parish, Rose Bay
- St Michael's Catholic Parish, Baulkham Hills
- St Michael's Catholic Parish, Meadowbank
- St Monica's Catholic Parish, Richmond
- St Oliver's Catholic Primary School, Harris Park
- St Paul of the Cross Catholic Parish, Dulwich Hill
- St Patrick's Cathedral, Parramatta
- St Patrick's Catholic Parish, Mortlake
- St Patrick's Catholic Primary School, Guildford
- St Pius X College, Chatswood
- St Therese Catholic Parish, Sadleir
- St Thomas Aquinas Catholic Parish, Springwood
- St Vincent's Catholic Parish, Ashfield
- St Vincent's Catholic Primary School, Ashfield
- St Vincent's Hospital Sydney
- St Vincent de Paul Society
- Stella Maris College, Manly
- Sydney Alliance
- Sydney Catholic Early Childhood Services
- TAFE NSW
- Talent Rise
- Thank You Ltd.
- The Cardoner Project
- The City of Parramatta Council
- 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
- The Human Art - Careers Coaching
- The Social Outfit
- The Little Marionette Café
- Thread Together
- Toast Masters
- Tzu Chi Foundation
- Uniting Church of Australia
- Uniting Early Learning and Childcare
- University of NSW
- University of Sydney Conservatorium of Music
- Uniting Church of Australia
- Vigil Training
- Western Sydney University
- Winmalee Anglican Church
- Woolworths
- Women in Migration Network
- Xavier Social Justice Network

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

## Statement of Comprehensive Income for the year ended 31 December 2021

		\$
<b>Revenue</b>		<b>3,087,804</b>
Donations	1,066,629	
Project funding	69,150	
Grants	1,656,121	
Covid 19 Government support – JobKeeper & JobSaver payments	274,780	
Other income	21,124	
<b>Expenses</b>		<b>2,807,521</b>
Staffing expenses	764,223	
Administrative & fundraising expenses	137,909	
Depreciation expenses	8,357	
Travel expenses	1,361	
Direct projects costs	545,461	
Grant expenses	1,350,210	
<b>Results from operating activities</b>		<b>280,283</b>
Financial income		30,553
Financial costs		-2,435
<b>Net financial income</b>		<b>28,118</b>
<b>Surplus for the period</b>		<b>308,401</b>
Other comprehensive income		-
<b>Total comprehensive income</b>		<b>308,401</b>





Make a difference. *Please act now.*

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