

# LINK NEWSLETTER



**Top:** (left to right) JRS staff members Sr Leone, Tamana and Moh share dates with visitors to our Parramatta office to celebrate the start of Ramadan.

**Bottom:** Fr Brett with a family attending our end-of-year Christmas gathering in December.

## Country Director's Address

Dear friends,

At Easter, Christians recall God's complete solidarity with all of humanity, not only standing with us as fully human in Jesus Christ, but joining us in the vulnerability of human suffering.

Our Easter hope tells us that God wants to draw all humanity into communion with each other and raise us up in the fulness of life.

I am often encouraged by the example of Fr. Greg Boyle, S.J., a Jesuit priest working in Los Angeles. He is well-known in the United States for his work with members of gangs on the edges of society, who are so often engaged in cycles of violence.

In his powerful book, *Tattoos on the Heart*, Boyle describes his work as, like Jesus, extending the circle of kinship to erase the margins that divide the insiders and outsiders of society.

*He writes: "We imagine no one standing outside of that circle, moving ourselves closer to the margins so that the margins themselves will be erased. We stand there with those whose dignity has been denied. We locate ourselves with the poor and the powerless and the voiceless."*

*"At the edges, we join the easily despised and the readily left out. We stand with the demonized so that the demonizing will stop. We situate ourselves right next to the disposable so that the day will come when we stop throwing people away."*

I like to think this is how JRS operates, as well. We stand with some of the most vulnerable and sidelined members of our community in order to erase the boundaries of exclusion and build a community where all may flourish.

I see this same solidarity in the encouraging generosity of our volunteers and supporters who take part in our work.

This Easter, I invite you to continue to be part of this work of solidarity, and thank you for your support for our mission.

**May you and your family enjoy a grace-filled Easter.**

Fr. Brett



## • Dindo's Story

**When people with lived experience are supported to lead, communities change.**

Dindo is a leader in JRS Australia's Refugee Leadership Program and a person seeking asylum in Australia. For more than three years, he has shared his story in classrooms and community spaces across Western Sydney.

Like many people living on temporary visas, he has spent years navigating uncertainty - not only about his future, but about access to the basic supports that allow people to live with dignity.

Much of Dindo's story is carried quietly. He is a loving father, a hard worker, and deeply dedicated to his faith. He balances a demanding manual labour job with regular health appointments while living with chronic health challenges that few people see.

***"Still, I have joy," says Dindo. "I will get to where I want to be."***

**Through JRS's Schools and Community Engagement Program, Dindo speaks with students about what it means to seek safety and belonging in Australia.**

At Cerdon College in Merrylands, he joined staff and students for their Social Justice Day. Ana Vella, a teacher at the College, described the workshop as "deeply moving, richly informative, and invaluable in deepening Year 10 students' commitment to translating their faith into action beyond Social Justice Day."

***"Dindo demonstrated exceptional skill in giving a human voice to a pressing issue of social injustice," Ana shared. "Students left inspired and equipped to think and act differently."***

The impact extends beyond the classroom. Students supported our Foodbank through a school-wide food drive, providing essential items for people seeking asylum here in Western Sydney.

**One student, Marie, contacted her local Member of Parliament after listening to Dindo's story.**



Dindo, at JRS Australia's Refugee Leadership showcase in July 2025.

***"Listening to Dindo speak with such faith moved me in ways I never expected," she shared. "His story showed me how to trust God even in times of struggle, and challenged me to think about how I can take action for those who cannot support themselves."***

**Alongside his leadership, Dindo continues to navigate the challenges of Australia's asylum system. Living on a protracted bridging visa has meant ongoing uncertainty, including insecure access to healthcare.**

Dindo lives with a serious health condition requiring ongoing, life-sustaining treatment. When his Medicare access ended late last year, it placed enormous strain on his emotional and financial wellbeing.

Through close accompaniment by JRS Australia's Casework and Refugee Leadership teams, in partnership with Life Without Barriers, Dindo regained secure access to Medicare.

The results of this advocacy offer some peace of mind, and space for Dindo to focus on his health, his family, and his future.

He is now on a pathway toward further treatment that we pray offers renewed possibility.

***"My faith keeps me going," Dindo says. "Even when the future feels uncertain, I believe my life still has purpose."***

Dindo's leadership - in classrooms, in community spaces, and through quiet perseverance - reminds us what is possible when we lift one another up.

**Read more about Dindo, and the impact of your support, on our website.**

## • Giving every child the opportunity to thrive.

When families begin a new school year, it should be a time of excitement and possibility. For many of the families we serve, however, the rising cost of uniforms, books, school supplies, and school fees can make this season deeply stressful.

JRS Australia is committed to ensuring that every child seeking asylum has access to education and the opportunity to thrive.

This year, thanks to the extraordinary generosity of our community, 160 backpacks were distributed to 80 families through the JRS Back-to-School Drive, ensuring children could start the year equipped, confident and ready to learn. Each backpack was filled with essential supplies: stationery, pencil cases, exercise books, calculators, headphones, water bottles, and other classroom necessities.

For parents already navigating high rents, food insecurity and prohibitive school costs, this support made a tangible difference. It eased immediate financial pressure and allowed families to redirect their already limited income toward other essentials such as rent, transport, and groceries.

*One parent shared: "I picked up the backpack supplies which included a lunchbox and water bottle. Special thanks to the JRS Community! My son got so excited that he can't wait to use them at kindergarten tomorrow!"*

**Beyond the practical items, these backpacks offer students something less visible, but perhaps even more important: confidence. They help ensure children can walk into their new classrooms feeling prepared and included.**

This initiative was made possible through the incredible support of Mums for Refugees, George's River Life Church, and many generous individuals from our broader community who donated bags, funds and school materials. This kindness is a powerful reminder that when community comes together, we can create meaningful change for real people.



Kristen, our Schools and Community Engagement Officer, alongside two generous community members from George's River donating to our Back-to-School Drive in January 2026.

Kristen Lazarus, our Schools & Community Engagement Officer, reflected:

*"What stood out most during the back-to-school drive was the spirit of connection. The community rallied together so that the families we serve felt seen and supported, and so that the youngest members of our community have every opportunity to thrive. It was a beautiful example of solidarity in action."*

Despite the success of this year's Back-to-School Drive, many of the families we serve continue to face significant financial and administrative barriers to education, including enrolment fees and complex application processes that can delay children starting school.

Living on extremely limited incomes and without access to mainstream support, even modest school costs can be prohibitive.

JRS Australia's casework team provides practical, hands-on assistance — from enrolment support to uniform vouchers — ensuring children can access education with dignity. With ongoing community support, we can continue walking alongside families throughout their schooling journey.

We invite you to continue standing alongside families seeking safety. Together, we can ensure every child has what they need to learn and thrive.

**[Read more on our website.](#)**

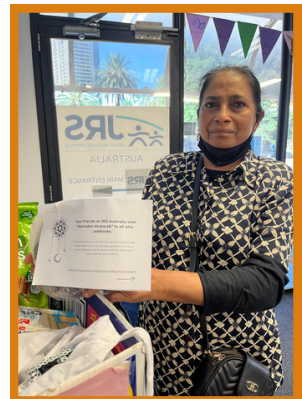
## • Sharing Dates for Shared Seasons

As our community marks the beginning of many holy seasons — with Lent and Ramadan underway, and Lunar New Year recently celebrated — we are reminded of the rich cultural and spiritual traditions that shape and sustain us all.

During Ramadan, many of the people we accompany break their daily fast with a date: a simple and meaningful symbol of nourishment, gratitude and faith. This year, we have had the pleasure of sharing dates with everyone visiting our Foodbank, along with a story about the significance of those dates for those observing Ramadan.

*In this time of renewal and hope across many traditions, we give thanks for the opportunity to walk alongside one another in friendship and shared humanity.*

*Thank you for being part of this journey.*



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