



# A MILLION STORIES

**REFUGEE WEEK 2026**

**SCHOOL CREATIVE  
COMPETITION**

# About the Competition

To mark **Refugee Week 2026**, Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS) Australia invites school students to take part in a creative competition responding to this year's Refugee Week theme:



**“A MILLION STORIES”**

As Europe recovered from the devastation of World War II, Australia responded to an international call to offer a future to people with nowhere to call home. Since that initial agreement in 1947 to receive 4000 refugees from Europe, **Australia has issued one million permanent humanitarian visas.**

That's **one million people** who fled danger and found safety here. **One million journeys** of courage and hope. **One million new beginnings** in Australia.

**But this isn't just about a number.** Behind each visa is a person with a story – someone who left everything behind to find safety, who showed incredible strength, and **who has helped build the Australia we know today.**

**Each story is unique. Each one is powerful.**

Think about it: **one person's arrival creates a ripple effect.** They have children. Those children have children. They start businesses, become doctors and teachers, create art, play sport, and contribute to their communities. **One person's story becomes many stories, woven together like colourful threads in a beautiful tapestry.**

**Through art, writing, and storytelling, students are invited to reflect on these stories, celebrate Australia's refugee legacy, and consider how we can continue to build a compassionate and welcoming Australia.**



## Who can Participate?

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- The competition is open to all students from **Kindergarten – Year 12**
- Entries may be submitted by **individual students** or **small groups** (maximum 4 students)

If you are participating in the **St Mary MacKillop Award**, participation in this Creative Competition can count towards 3 hours of your 'Advocacy' requirement.

## Submission Categories

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- **Visual Art:** Drawing, painting, illustration, collage, photography, sculpture or mixed media
- **Written Works:** Poetry, short story, or reflective or creative writing (**max 400 words**)
- **Video:** Short film, interview, animation, spoken word performance, or digital storytelling (**max 1 minute**)

## Theme Guidance

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Students are asked to respond creatively to the theme '**A Million Stories**' by exploring ideas such as:

- The journey of a refugee or person seeking asylum
- How one person's story can shape families, communities, and future generations
- Australia's history of welcoming people from around the world
- Belonging, kindness, diversity, community, safety, hope and dignity
- How young people can show solidarity and help everyone feel like they belong

JRS Australia is committed to **dignity, respect, and ethical storytelling**. We ask that all participating students and schools ensure that:

- Refugees and people seeking asylum are represented with respect and humanity
- Stories avoid stereotypes, sensationalism, or dehumanising language
- If a real person's story is referenced, it is done sensitively and with consent. We recommend referring to people anonymously, unless explicit permission has been given
- Submissions focus on strength, resilience, and shared humanity, not only suffering

**Teachers are encouraged to guide students in thoughtful discussions about language, power, and representation.**



# Submission Requirements

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- All submissions must be the **original work** of the student(s)
- Each student/group may submit **1 entry total**
- Students are encouraged to include a **short reflection** (max 5 sentences) explaining how their work responds to the theme 'A Million Stories', to help the judges understand the student's thinking and creative process.

To **enter**: please fill out [this form](#), or scan the QR code 

- **Visual Artworks** should be scanned or photographed and submitted as an image file. Please keep the **original artwork** in the event it is selected for exhibition
- **Written works** should be submitted as a PDF
- **Videos** should be submitted as a MP4 file



## Judging Criteria and Prizes

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All submissions will be reviewed by a **panel of JRS Australia staff** and invited **guest judges**. Entries will be judged based on the following **criteria**:

- Engagement with the **theme** 'A Million Stories'
- **Creativity** and **originality**
- Emotional **impact** and **clarity** of message

**Primary School** and **High School** winners will be selected in **each submission category** (Visual Artwork, Written Work and Video).

### Winning works will:

- Be displayed at the **JRS Refugee Week Exhibition** alongside works by Refugee Leaders, and receive an invitation to attend the Exhibition Launch Event
- Be featured on the JRS Australia website and social media
- Receive a JRS Australia **certificate**

## Key Dates

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- **Submissions Close**: 15 May 2026, 5pm
- **Winners Announced**: 3 June 2026
- **Awards Presented**: 12 June 2026 (TBC)

Scanned copies of all visual artworks and written works submissions may be displayed at the JRS Refugee Week Exhibition Launch Event on **12 June 2026**. The winners will be awarded their certificates and have their original works showcased at this event.

**Please save the date – further details to come!**



# Creating your Submission

1

## Research

Begin by learning more about the theme “A Million Stories”. This might include exploring Australia’s history of welcoming refugees and people seeking asylum, learning about the experiences of people who have been forced to flee their homes, or reflecting on stories of belonging and community.

2

## Create

Using your research and imagination, create an original piece of work that responds to the theme “A Million Stories.” Your submission may take the form of visual art, writing, or video, as outlined in the “Submission Categories”. Students are encouraged to interpret the theme creatively and in their own voice. Remember **creativity** and **originality** will be rewarded!

3

## Reflect

Students are encouraged to include a short reflection (maximum 5 sentences) to accompany their submission. The reflection might explain what inspired the work, how it connects to the theme “A Million Stories”, or what the student learned or thought about while creating it. The reflection will help the judges better understand the student’s ideas, intentions, and creative process. Parents or teachers may assist younger students to write or record their reflection, using the student’s own words.

# Get creating!

We look forward to receiving your submissions. If you have any questions, please contact:



**Kristen Lazarus**  
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