

# 2025 annual report



## stories of hope

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*"Thank you from the bottom of my heart for your incredible support during my job search journey. When I first arrived in Australia, I felt lost and alone, but your kindness gave me hope, strength, and a reason to keep going. Your help with internet, resume support, food, and clothes meant so much. Because of you, I was able to get a job with Australia Post and take a big step forward. I will never forget your care and compassion. Please continue to support others in need, just as you supported me."*

Julie, Employment Program Participant.

### Acknowledgment of Country

JRS Australia acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of the lands and waters across Australia, and we pay our deepest respects to Elders past and present. Our offices are located in beautiful Parramatta, on Dharug Country. We acknowledge that sovereignty was never ceded, and that this land always was and always will be Aboriginal land.

Front cover: Tamana Mirzada, Employment Program Manager, with friend and client, attending the Refugee Leadership Showcase Event 'Free Together', held in honour of Refugee Week on 4 July 2025.

Photo above: A banner created by women participating in art classes, coordinated through a partnership between JRS Australia's Employment Program and our friends at CMRC.

We are committed to adopting environmentally sustainable practices at JRS Australia, so we have reduced our printed mail-outs. If you would like to be added to our distribution list for hard copies of our publications please let us know via [info@jrs.org.au](mailto:info@jrs.org.au) or +61 2 9356 3888.

Throughout 2025, JRS Australia continued our mission to **accompany, serve and advocate** for refugees, people seeking asylum, and migrants in vulnerable situations.

We do so proudly from **our two spaces in Western Sydney**, where we work alongside our **community on the ground**, and advocate for **systemic change across Australia** by uplifting the stories, leadership and expertise of the people we serve.

As one of the oldest refugee organisations in Australia, we have been doing this work for more than **40 years**.

We are guided by our **Jesuit charism** and the Universal Apostolic Preferences of the Society of Jesus which call us to walk with the excluded.

Inspired by a **faith that does justice**, we seek to **protect the vulnerable, accompany those on the margins, and welcome all who seek safety in our community**.

And together, we write **stories of hope**. Through moments of connection that ease isolation, small acts of compassion that rebuild trust, and helping hands that open doors to new beginnings. These stories begin with the courage of someone rebuilding their life, and grow when our community stands together and creates the conditions for **hope to flourish**.

We are deeply grateful to everyone who has walked alongside us in 2025, making these stories of hope possible.

## 2025 - Together we:

- **Served, accompanied and advocated** alongside over **3,400** people seeking asylum, refugees, and migrants in vulnerable situations.



throughout the year.

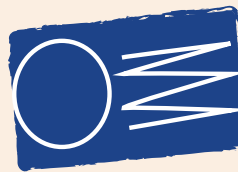
- **Welcomed 645** people to our Foodbank, distributing over **8,000** food parcels to families

- **Connected 522** families with specialist casework, legal referrals, housing and homelessness relief, healthcare, mental health support, and other emergency relief.

- **Empowered 144** people to build their skills and confidence; and connected **70** people with paid work in Australia.



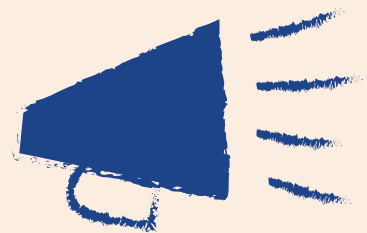
- **Bridged the Digital Divide**, supporting **111** people with access to a digital device, and **81** with digital literacy training
- **Mobilised 1,742** people by facilitating access to Opal Cards for discounted travel.



- **Delivered 400** English classes to over 35 people

- **Raised the voices** of leaders with lived experience to over **9,000** students, teachers and community groups.

- **Shared our stories** with an online community of over **7,000** people.



- **Protected** over **180** women and children at risk through our Finding Safety Project, dedicating over **890** hours to face-to-face casework and community development.



**AND 120** dedicated **volunteers donated** over **10,000** hours of service, including **400** hours of English classes over the year.

# 4 our people

## Board of Directors

Jim Barber, Chair (*from February*)

Fr Gregory Jacobs, SJ

Dr. John Bosco Ngendakurio

Dr. Anh Nguyen Austen (*from October*)

Tony MacMahon (*from October*)

Dr Eve Lester, Chair (*to February*)

Catherine Verschuer (*to February*)

Muzafar Ali (*to September*)

Dr. Elizabeth Biok (*to October*)

## Staff and Interns

Amelia Savage – Head of Policy, Advocacy and Communications

Fr Brett O'Neill, S.J. – Country Director (*from August*)

Charlotte Evans – Interim Community Engagement Coordinator (*from February to May*)

Daniel Bolotin – Philanthropy Manager (*to February*)

Gabrielle Leafe – Casework and Emergency Relief Manager (*Maternity Leave Cover to August*); Service Transformation and Capacity Building Manager (*from August*)

Hedra Abdo – Finance Assistant

Joannie Lee – Refugee Leadership Officer (*from April*)

Josephine Rechichi – Acting Country Director (*to August*); Assistant Country Director

Kamal Kamalenoson – Head of Strategy and Operational Sustainability (*from January*)

Kevser Pirbudak – Complex Caseworker

Kim Mandelik – Office Manager

Kristen Lazarus – Schools and Community Engagement Officer (*from June*)

Magdalene Konneh – Complex Caseworker, Finding Safety Project

May Hadaya – Volunteer Program Manager

Maria Merzian – Fundraising and Operations Coordinator (*from April to December*)

Medina Hadziahmetovic – Complex Caseworker (*Maternity Leave Cover to January*)

Michael Melville – Food & Material Aid Officer (*to June*)

Moh Moh Thet – Employment Project Officer

Molly Jackson – Policy and Communications Manager

Noëlle Adachi – Ethical Storytelling Intern (*July to December*)

Rose Maninyitia – Casework and Emergency Relief Manager (*On Maternity leave to June*)

Sara Muzamil – Finding Safety Project Manager

Susana Gale – Accountant

Tamana Mirzada – Employment Program Manager

Vaishnavi Kalidhason – Logistics (Food & Material Aid) and Operations Support Officer (*from May*)

Vandana Setia – Project Officer, Finding Safety Project (*from November*)

Vin Gajanayake – Schools Engagement Coordinator (*to April*)

Zahra Hashemabadi Barat – Food and Material Aid Officer (*to February*)

## Volunteers

We are immensely grateful to the more than 120 volunteers who donated over 10,180 hours of service to support our work in 2025. While too numerous to name individually, each of you has played a part in creating welcome, restoring dignity, and helping stories of hope take shape across our community.





When the Provincial, Fr. Quyen, invited me to take over as chair of JRS in 2025, he asked me to focus on two priorities: completing the development of JRS Australia's Strategic Plan for 2026-2029, and strengthening the organisation's financial sustainability so that

it can continue delivering its vital work. This came at a time when years of funding constraints had placed pressure on resources, as demand for support continued to grow.

I am pleased to report the Board has now formally adopted the Strategic Plan and recommended it for approval by the Society of Jesus Australia. I would like to pay tribute to my predecessor, Dr. Eve Lester, her board, the JRS staff and donors for the significant work and thought that went into shaping the plan over the past year. I also thank our new Country Director, Fr. Brett O'Neill SJ, for bringing this process to completion.

The JRS Australia Strategic Plan (2026-2029) aligns with the apostolic preference of the Society of Jesus to "walk with the poor, the outcasts of the world, those whose dignity has been violated, in a mission of reconciliation and justice." It is the culmination of more than 12-months of review, reflection and discernment about how JRS Australia can most effectively and sustainably meet the emerging needs of the people we serve.

Our core focus remains on those in greatest need; typically, those on temporary visas seeking asylum in Australia who face significant barriers due to their visa status. Through our unique approach to accompanying, serving and advocating for refugees and people seeking asylum, JRS Australia seeks to reduce the impact and risk of ongoing destitution, crisis, poor mental health outcomes, violence and long-term disenfranchisement from systems of support. In doing so, we also contribute to the wellbeing and common good of the broader Australian community.

Alongside this strategic work, the Board and management have continued to strengthen JRS Australia's financial position. For many years, the organisation has responded to growing need and weathered severe reductions in government funding. JRS Australia relies heavily on the generosity of donors and partners to sustain essential services. In recent years, this has been complemented by extraordinary support, including a significant bequest and major gifts that have enabled continuity of JRS Australia's essential operations.

Building on this foundation, we have strengthened the organisation's financial planning, diversified our income streams, and deepened our engagement with partners and supporters to ensure the long-term sustainability of our work. This includes moving from a position of ongoing financial constraint towards greater stability, better aligned with the scale and importance of the need we are responding to.

**Our core focus remains on those in greatest need; typically, those on temporary visas seeking asylum in Australia who face significant barriers due to their visa status.**

I am pleased to report that 2025 saw JRS Australia achieve a sustainable surplus and solid cash position, safeguarding the longevity of the organisation. Thanks to your ongoing generosity, we are able to continue our mission with confidence in our long-term financial future.

In closing, I want to thank the Board, staff, volunteers and, above all, our generous donors for your compassion and support in 2025.

**Ad Maiorem Dei Gloriam**  
**Jim Barber**



# 6 message from our country director



It was a great honor to begin serving as Country Director of JRS Australia in August 2025. Since commencing in this role, I have been struck by the breadth of services JRS provides in accompanying some of the most overlooked members of our community.

I have been particularly moved by the many talented and energetic volunteers we rely upon to amplify these services and who generously serve in an understated way.

Further, I have seen so many schools, parishes, and community groups donating their time, food, and other material aid to support the refugees and people seeking asylum we accompany.

We see so much good – so much hope – in our community.

Your support for JRS signals to refugees and people seeking asylum that they can find a dignified welcome and a home in our Australian community.

Over 2025, the Catholic Church celebrated a jubilee year. Taking place every 25 years, these jubilee celebrations are typically marked by pilgrimage. For 2025, the focusing theme was ‘Pilgrims of Hope,’ inviting reflection on the sources of hope in our lives.

*Country Director, Fr Brett O'Neill, and School and Community Engagement Officer, Kristen, at the Australian Catholic Youth Festival (ACYF) in Melbourne in December 2025, where they delivered a workshop on being a 'pilgrim of hope' alongside refugees and people seeking asylum.*

At the Jubilee gathering of pilgrims marking the World Day of Migrants and Refugees in Rome, Pope Leo XIV highlighted the “people of good will, who work in the service of migrants, and promote a new culture of fraternity... beyond stereotypes and prejudices.”

In his message for that day, the pope noted that a welcoming community can “be a living witness to hope,” by recognising and affirming the dignity of migrants and refugees.

Our wide community of supporters gives me hope. At JRS, we rely heavily on this community, not only to keep us going with material and financial support, but also to help us build a network of hospitality for those we accompany. Your support for JRS signals to refugees and people seeking asylum that they can find a dignified welcome and a home in our Australian community.

While there may be some voices of exclusion in our society, these do not have the last word. Our supporters give me hope that Australia, at our best, is a compassionate society that can offer warm hospitality to those who have come among us seeking protection and a new home.

I am most grateful to our Board, staff, volunteers, and donors for all that you do to contribute to our work.

**Many blessings to you all**  
**Fr. Brett O'Neill, S.J.**



## Complex Casework & Emergency Relief

Throughout 2025, the JRS Casework and Emergency Relief Program continued to provide essential support to people seeking asylum and refugees experiencing complex vulnerabilities. The program supported individuals through complex and non-complex needs assessments, the provision of psychosocial support, crisis intervention, information and referrals, advocacy, and accompaniment across a range of interconnected challenges including homelessness, mental health concerns, financial hardship, unemployment, visa insecurity and barriers to healthcare.

Against a backdrop of rising living costs, housing insecurity, prolonged visa uncertainty, and increasing demand across the sector, the program remained focused on ensuring individuals and families could access practical assistance, advocacy, and holistic support.

A major focus throughout the year was strengthening the quality and consistency of support provided. Additional resourcing enabled the team to engage more meaningfully with the people we serve and shift the focus of the program beyond the provision of emergency relief alone. This allowed greater emphasis on complex case support, capacity building, and longer-term resilience outcomes.

Individual advocacy continued to be a core aspect of the program, particularly in supporting people excluded from mainstream services and systems due to temporary visa status or other structural barriers.



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The program also continued to support a growing number of people excluded from the Status Resolution Support Services (SRSS), living in the community without a safety net. The vast majority of referrals to the Casework program related to people struggling to meet their most basic needs, particularly access to food, safe housing and emergency relief, reflecting the increasing financial hardship and housing insecurity experienced by people seeking asylum.

Throughout the year, the program provided casework support to **522 individuals and families** experiencing a broad range of complex and intersecting needs. This included supporting **73 individuals** to access legal assistance and immigration support including referrals to specialist legal services, assistance in understanding visa processes and conditions, and advocacy relating to matters such as the reinstatement of work rights and access to immigration pathways.

Access to healthcare remained a key priority for the Casework team in 2025, with **53 individuals** supported to access dental care through charitable providers. The program also supported **75 individuals** to access broader healthcare and wellbeing supports, including specialist counselling referrals, Medicare access, referrals to health services, and assistance navigating complex healthcare systems.

A significant achievement this year was JRS' partnership with the OneSight EssilorLuxottica Foundation, which enabled the delivery of a dedicated community optometry clinic for people seeking asylum and refugees. The clinic provided free eye tests and prescription glasses to individuals who would otherwise be unable to afford vision care. In total, **95 individuals** were able to access vision aids and optometry services through the JRS Casework team in 2025.



# 8 programs and services

Alongside direct casework, the program increasingly invested in mental health, psychosocial support and community capacity building activities.

The program also supported children and families experiencing barriers to education and childcare. Throughout 2025, **27 families** were supported with school enrolment assistance, including help navigating enrolment processes, advocacy with schools, and managing fees. A further **32 families** received access to fee-free childcare through JRS' partnership with Goodstart Early Learning.

Alongside direct casework, the program increasingly invested in mental health, psychosocial support and community capacity building activities. A Client Engagement Survey identified strong demand for mental health workshops, resilience-building activities and opportunities for social connection. In response, the program secured funding for a Men's Wellbeing Program and expanded community lunches and drop-in supports to help reduce social isolation and strengthen community connection and wellbeing.

The program also maintained a strong advocacy focus throughout 2025, contributing to consultations and sector-wide advocacy relating to homelessness, SRSS reform, detention, and the exclusion of people seeking asylum from mainstream housing and social supports. Staff actively participated in working groups, consultations and policy submissions to ensure the experiences of the people JRS serves continued to inform broader systemic advocacy efforts.

## Foodbank and Material Aid

Throughout 2025, the JRS Foodbank continued to provide essential pantry staples and household necessities to the people we serve. For many of the individuals and families supported by JRS, prolonged visa uncertainty, exclusion from government income support, barriers to employment and rising living



costs meant that meeting even the most basic needs remained an ongoing challenge.

Throughout the year, the program continued to strengthen its systems and service delivery model to ensure support remained equitable, responsive and sustainable amid increasing demand. Through the dedication of volunteers and the generosity of schools, parishes, community groups and corporate partners, JRS was able to provide regular access to food and essential items to over **150 families per week**.

The Foodbank also continued to serve as an important point of connection and engagement for the people we accompany. For many families, regular visits to the Foodbank provided opportunities to access additional supports including casework, emergency relief, healthcare referrals and community programs. The program also offered a consistent point of contact with JRS staff and volunteers, helping to reduce social isolation and ensure people remained connected to support.





## Employment and Digital Inclusion

*“I would like to express my heartfelt thanks to the JRS Employment Support Team for their constant support and encouragement. Your guidance has given me the confidence to take steps toward building a better future. From helping me improve my resume and interview skills to always being there to listen and motivate me, your support has made a big difference in my life. Thank you for believing in me and walking beside me on this journey. The support I received was very valuable to me.”* Employment Program Participant

**In 2025, we welcomed 144 new participants through our Employment Program, supporting people seeking asylum and refugees to build confidence, skills, and pathways to meaningful work!**

For many people seeking asylum, finding employment can be difficult due to visa restrictions, rising living costs, housing insecurity, limited safety nets. People also face language barriers, lack of local networks, and limited recognition of overseas qualifications. We tackle this by offering practical, person-centred support and training, so we can walk alongside people as they rebuild their lives, strengthen their skills, and pursue new opportunities in Australia. Our support includes resume preparation, interview coaching, job applications, and referrals to training and education opportunities.

**A major highlight of the year was the first Employment Job Fair in Parramatta, delivered in partnership with the Refugee and Asylum Seekers Employment Working Group (RASEWG). Over 300 people joined the Job Fair, connecting with inclusive employers, education providers, and service providers. The event created practical pathways into employment for people seeking asylum, and gave our community an opportunity to showcase their skills and build confidence in the opportunities available.**



*Employment Project Officer Moh supporting a participant with a refurbished laptop, July 2025.*

“Bridging the Digital Divide” also remains a key priority of ours. Through the Digital Sisters Program and the Digital Inclusion and Literacy for Employment Program, supported by the Impact100 Sydney Grant, **81 people** engaged in essential digital skills training for work, study, and daily life. Training included computer basics, online job searching, email communication, and workplace technology skills.

Thanks to the generosity of the Aware Super, The Laptop Initiative, and the Reconnect Project, **111 people** received a digital device. Another **49 participants** received a Sim Card with access to free internet and phone usage for 12 months, donated by Optus and Good360.

Finally, through **246 one-on-one work readiness sessions**, we have supported people to access work essentials such as laptops, internet access, uniforms, transport, safety certificates, and training licences: all pieces of a larger puzzle that helps people seeking asylum feel confident, and job ready! Thank you to Our Lady of the Way Parish, North Sydney, The Magnolia Foundation and Knights of the Southern Cross (Branch 90 Caboolture) for your generous contributions to this initiative.

Training included computer basics, online job searching, email communication, and workplace technology skills.

# 10 programs and services

*"Your support has made a real difference in my life. Being connected has opened up new opportunities for learning, staying in touch with my loved ones, and looking for work. It might seem like a small thing, but to me, it means freedom, progress, and hope. Thank you for believing in us and investing in our future."*

- Employment Program Participant



## This Year in Action

- **144** people received one-on-one employment support
- **70** people found meaningful, paid employment
- **81** people learned new digital literacy skills
- **111** people were connected with refurbished laptops
- **58** people received a phone SIM card with access to free internet and phone usage.
- **300** people joined our first Employment Job Fair for refugees and people seeking asylum.

## Employment Program Participant Testimonial:

*"This course has not only helped me build digital skills but also allowed me to connect with other women in the community. I'm extremely thankful for this opportunity."*

## Khujesta's Story: From Learning to Leading

One of our participants, Khujesta, a newly arrived refugee from Afghanistan, joined our Employment Program and received work-readiness training and mentoring. Since then, she has successfully found work supporting newly arrived communities with increasing their digital literacy skills and social connections.

"I am so grateful to JRS," Khujesta says. "JRS feels like a family, a place where I can be myself, cry, and be happy. And I'm grateful to Australia for giving us freedom, safety, and opportunity."

To learn more about Khujesta's journey see: <https://aus.jrs.net/en/news/khujestas-story-from-learning-to-leading-through-digital-skills/>







## Finding Safety

**Throughout 2025, Finding Safety continued to play a crucial role in supporting women on temporary visas who are marginalised by gender-based violence (GBV), including domestic and family violence, child and forced marriage, dowry abuse, female genital mutilation (FGM), trafficking, and modern slavery.**

The project specifically assists those navigating complex visa situations, promoting inclusion, and community resilience for women on temporary visas including women seeking asylum who have experienced or are experiencing GBV.

Recognising their vulnerabilities, such as limited access to safety, mainstream support services, housing, childcare, and legal protections, as well as social isolation, Finding Safety works to bridge these gaps and provide support.

A core focus of the project is ensuring that immigration status does not prevent women experiencing GBV from accessing support. We uphold safety as a fundamental human right and work with government agencies, service providers, and community organizations to address systemic barriers and advocate for policy changes that improve pathways to safety for this cohort.

The project also builds community resilience by empowering women with lived experience through our Community Mobilisers program, strengthening peer networks through community events, and trainings to create sustainable support structures. In addition, Finding Safety offers targeted support groups, including groups for women fleeing war zones and for women who have experienced FGM, providing safe spaces for connection, healing, and peer support.

The Finding Safety Project aims to address both primary prevention and awareness-raising while also supporting women who are experiencing or have already experienced gender-based violence. The project helps secure their safety and empowers them through trainings, leadership and advocacy.

### Programs for Empowerment

This year, the Finding Safety Project delivered a range of impactful programs that supported women's health, skills development, and social inclusion.

A breast and pelvic cancer screening session, presented by Dr. Dr. Supreet Sandhu, significantly increased awareness of early detection. Following the session, one participant sought medical advice, received a diagnosis, and was able to access urgent treatment.

**10 women** engaged in a 7-week sewing program, equipping them with practical skills to support pathways into employment and financial independence.

A digital literacy program for senior women strengthened participants' confidence, independence, and safety in navigating technology.

**The project also builds community resilience by empowering women with lived experience through our Community Mobilisers program, strengthening peer networks through community events, and trainings to create sustainable support structures.**



# 12 programs and services

## Two new support groups were established:

- A support group for newly arrived refugee women from conflict-affected countries, including Palestine and Sudan.
- An FGM support group, providing peer support and a platform for advocacy to prevent the practice.

## A Voice for Change

The Finding Safety Project maintained strong engagement in advocacy and sector leadership.

At the 5th World Conference on Women's Shelters in Sydney, attended by over 200 global delegates, Project Manager Sara Muzamil presented on homelessness and violence experienced by women on temporary visas, as part of the National Advocacy Group executive.

At the Women and the Australian Church (WATAC) Conference, former Assistant Country Director Josephine Rechichi highlighted the importance of women-led, lived-experience-informed spaces within faith communities. Her session was widely recognised as a standout contribution.

Finding Safety also hosted a Symposium, examining the cultural, physical, and human rights dimensions of FGM. The event brought together professional expertise and lived experience, strengthening awareness and advocacy across our sector.

A key highlight was the inaugural **Faith in Action Forum: The Role of Religious Communities in the Prevention of Gender-Based Violence (GBV)**. Attended by over 80 stakeholders, including government, faith, and community representatives, the forum fostered cross-sector dialogue on collaborative approaches to preventing GBV. The event was opened by Minister Jodie Harrison MP and Member for Parramatta Donna Davis MP, underscoring the urgency of addressing gender-based violence, and Finding Safety's role in championing this cause for women on temporary visas.

## Julia's Story: Finding Hope

When Julia arrived at JRS Australia, she had already endured more than most people could imagine.

Forced to flee political persecution in her home country, Julia had lost her husband, been separated from her eldest son, and arrived in Australia seeking safety. Years later, after experiencing domestic and family violence in Australia, she found herself homeless, isolated, and unsure where to turn.

Through JRS Australia's Women's Space, Julia was connected with emergency accommodation, legal support, counselling, English classes, employment training, and a welcoming community of women. With support and determination, she began rebuilding her life.

What started as a search for safety became a journey towards confidence, connection, and leadership. Julia improved her English, developed new skills, participated in training and workshops, and joined the Community Mobilisers Program. Today, she uses her lived experience to advocate against gender-based violence and contribute to community forums and conversations aimed at creating change.

With ongoing support, Julia was granted permanent residency and is now focused on building a secure and independent future.

Reflecting on her journey, Julia shares:

*"I'm forever grateful for the support I received from the JRS Finding Safety team. With their help, I found the strength to rebuild my life and stand on my own feet again."*

Julia's story is a reminder that hope can grow even in the most difficult circumstances. When people are met with safety, dignity, and community, they can not only rebuild their own lives, but help create a brighter future for others.

## Advocacy Overview

In 2025, our advocacy responded to a time of growing pressure on refugees, people seeking asylum, and migrants, both in Australia and internationally.

People on temporary visas are routinely deprived of access to their basic rights, including safe and affordable housing, medical and social safety nets, and meaningful opportunities for work or study. We advocate for legislative change that will improve access to these rights, and increase pathways to permanency for people seeking safety in our community.

We engage with decision-makers through formal advocacy, including submissions to government, and participation in the NGO dialogue, and informally through sector coalitions, interagency forums, advocacy campaigns, and community education and awareness-raising. We also work closely with schools, parishes, and community groups to mobilise Australians to take action for refugees and people seeking asylum.

At the core of our work are people with lived experience, who raise their voices, share their stories, and advocate about issues that affect their lives. Their voices are essential in creating a more compassionate and welcoming Australia, for everyone.

## Advocacy in Action

### A Fairer Protection System

JRS Australia contributed to a joint civil society submission to the UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention, highlighting concerns about mandatory detention, offshore processing, and long-term uncertainty experienced by people seeking asylum. We also facilitated the participation of people with lived experience at a roundtable discussion with the Working Group upon their visit to Australia, and provided a submission to the Australian Government's Humanitarian Program 2025–26 consultation, calling for expanded and more responsive protection pathways, and continued sector advocacy calling for permanent protection pathways for the fast-track cohort. We also raised concerns migration amendments that have seen the resumption

of offshore detention on Nauru, and threats to procedural fairness and legal safeguards for people seeking asylum.

### Housing and human rights

JRS Australia made a formal submission to the NSW Homelessness Strategy 2025–2035, calling for people on temporary visas to be included in homelessness planning and responses. We also advocated for access to work rights, healthcare, housing support, and emergency assistance for people excluded from government safety nets. We were proud to contribute to Australia's joint NGO submission to the Universal Periodic Review, and to join a broad coalition supporting a Human Rights Act for New South Wales and a Human Rights Act for Australia.

### Global movement for peace

As part of the global JRS network operating in over 57 countries around the world, we share a mandate to safeguard our international humanitarian protection system, to protect people on the move, and to shed light on emerging global crises. We continue to do



# 14 advocacy and engagement

In 2025, our advocacy responded to a time of growing pressure on refugees, people seeking asylum, and migrants, both in Australia and internationally.

this during a time of great need, and political division, standing in solidarity with communities affected by conflict and displacement, in particular drawing attention to crises in Sudan, Myanmar and Gaza.

## Climate Mobility with Dignity

As climate change increasingly drives displacement across our region, we continue to build expertise and partnerships focused on climate mobility with dignity. We were thrilled to present research at the 20th International Association for the Study of Forced Migration Conference in Yogyakarta, and to connect with our JRS colleagues across the Asia-Pacific who also work in this space. In Sydney, we proudly partnered the Edmund Rice Centre, and the Asia Pacific Network of Refugees to form the Climate

Mobility Collective, hosting a Climate Mobility with Dignity panel event at the University of Sydney. We extend our gratitude to Charlotte Evans who has driven this work on a volunteer basis for JRS Australia across a number of years.

## Federal Election Advocacy

The 2025 Federal Election provided an important opportunity to elevate issues affecting the people we serve. Throughout the year, we worked with sector partners, supporters, and community leaders to ensure these issues remained part of the national conversation. At the Sydney Alliance Federal Election Assembly, we joined more than 800 community, faith, union, and civil society leaders calling for action on housing affordability, climate justice, and social inclusion. Through the Catholic Alliance for People Seeking Asylum, we ran a national campaign throughout the election period, calling for the end to offshore detention, and permanent protection pathways for those stuck in limbo. We also supported and distributed advocacy resources and template letters for community members to advocate directly with their local MPs.



JRS staff with leaders, holding certificates following completion of Public Speaking and Storytelling training on 18th October 2025.





*Refugee Leaders gather with staff in JRS Australia's Policy, Advocacy and Communications team at the "Free Together" Refugee Week event on the 4th of July 2025.*

## Refugee Leadership:

Throughout 2025, JRS Australia's Refugee Leadership Program worked alongside **16 leaders** with lived experience of forced displacement to share their stories in their own words, and advocate for change for themselves and their communities.

Through school and community engagement events, leadership activities, and external advocacy opportunities, refugee leaders shared their experiences with thousands of people. A core goal of this program is to ensure people with lived experience are paid for their time and expertise. Across these speaking engagements, workshops and community events, JRS facilitated **\$13,750 in paid opportunities** for refugee leaders.

We are also creating new pathways for leaders to grow their skills and influence. Throughout the year, leaders engaged in advocacy opportunities beyond JRS, including contributing to discussions with the United Nations Working Group on Arbitrary Detention and providing case studies for a UN Submission on the Externalisation of Migration Governance.

One of the highlights of the year was our annual Refugee Week Showcase, co-hosted with the Parramatta Diocese for the third consecutive year. Under the theme "Free, Together", more than **75 community members** gathered to celebrate leaders' creativity, leadership and resilience through storytelling, poetry, music and film.

"To anyone who's ever felt they didn't belong: please know that your difference is your strength," shared Zainab. "And your story, like mine, is needed in the tapestry of a truly diverse and compassionate world."

## Learning to lead

The Refugee Leadership Program ran a Public Speaking and Storytelling Training on Saturday 18th October to 10 leaders. Leaders learnt key skills in public speaking and storytelling, exercising their rights when sharing their story, and ways to implement selfcare strategies to support their mental health. We thank Cathy Ngo from Keynoteworthy for delivering the public speaking and storytelling session pro-bono.

We are especially proud of the 5 new leaders who joined the program in 2025, and we are looking forward to seeing them share their stories at upcoming community and schools' events.

## Schools and Community

Throughout 2025, JRS Australia's Schools and Community Engagement Program created opportunities for stories of hope to be shared, heard, and transformed into action. Through **40 workshops** and events, we reached more than **9,487 students**, teachers, parishioners and community members.

From school classrooms and parish halls, to teacher conferences and a visit to the Australian Catholic Youth Festival, we brought the voices of people with lived experience into spaces across Sydney and beyond. These conversations helped foster greater understanding of the challenges facing refugees and people seeking asylum, and our community rallied to take action.

Throughout the year, schools, parishes and community groups supported our work through food drives, fundraising initiatives, advocacy activities and volunteering. We also hosted excursions to our Parramatta office where students and teachers helped pack food hampers, while others wrote to elected representatives or raised awareness within their own communities.

At its heart, this program is about creating opportunities for encounter. When people hear

# 16 advocacy and engagement



*Refugee Leadership Officer Joannie alongside leader Batoul, delivering a Refugee Week workshop to primary schools students at Marist Catholic College North Shore.*

Teacher Ana Vella described it as “deeply moving, richly informative, and invaluable in deepening Year 10 students’ commitment to translating their faith into action”.

directly from those with lived experience, barriers are broken down, perspectives can shift, and communities are often moved to act. Through these conversations and relationships, we continue to see people put their values into practice and contribute to positive change here in Australia.



*Catherine McAuley Westmead students selling zipper doopors to fundraise for JRS during Term 4 2025.*

## Putting Faith into Action: Cerdon College

At Cerdon College in Merrylands, JRS Refugee Leader Dindo joined our School and Community Engagement Officer for the school’s Social Justice Day, speaking with Year 10 students about what it means to seek safety in Australia.

Teacher Ana Vella described it as “deeply moving, richly informative, and invaluable in deepening Year 10 students’ commitment to translating their faith into action”.

In the days that followed, moved by Dindo’s story, one student wrote to her local MP. Another reflected: “Your talk on Social Justice Day really inspired me to take action and keep caring deeply about these issues. Listening to Dindo speak with such faith moved me in ways I never expected”. This is the heart of JRS’s schools program: young people encountering the human reality of Australia’s flawed asylum system, and discovering that they have the power to change the story.

## Christmas Miracles

The Christmas season saw incredible generosity from our community. During our Advent Food Drive, schools, parishes and members of the community donated over 1,500 bags of food, which saw our Foodbank shelves overflow. Thanks to this extraordinary generosity, we were able to send over **150 families** home with additional food for the holiday break, and reopened in the new year with a fully stocked Foodbank.

At Catherine McAuley School Westmead, students threw themselves into fundraising throughout Term 4, selling snow cones, Christmas cards, lemonade, Krispy Kremes, artwork, sausages and more, raising a remarkable \$12,000 for JRS. Their enthusiasm, creativity, and genuine desire to understand and support our mission has been an inspiration to our whole team

## Hope in Action

- **40** workshops and events delivered
- **9,487** people engaged across schools, parishes and the community
- **Over 5,600** bags of food donated from schools, parishes and the community

**The stories of hope in this report were made possible by the generosity of those who give their time, resources, expertise, and voice in support of people in need. From volunteers and donors to community groups, schools, parishes, foundations, and partners, countless people have contributed to our mission this year. We extend our sincere thanks to everyone that accompanied us on this journey in 2025, in particular:**

- Addison Road Community Organisation
- Alaseel Restaurant
- All Saints Catholic Church, Liverpool
- Arts and Cultural Exchange Parramatta
- Asia Pacific Network of Refugees
- Asylum Seekers Centre
- Australia Post
- Australian Philanthropic Services Foundations
- Aware Super
- Beatrice Sesay- Barrie
- Bethany Catholic College Hustville
- Blacktown Ponds Lions Club
- CareerSeekers
- Catherine McAuley Westmead
- Catholic Alliance for People Seeking Asylum
- Catholic Diocese of Parramatta
- Catholic Healthcare
- Catholic Parish of the Upper Blue Mountains
- Catholic Schools Parramatta Diocese
- Cerdon College Merrylands
- Christ the King North Rocks
- City of Parramatta
- Clancy Catholic College
- Clancy Catholic College West Hoxton
- Collective Leisure
- Community Migrant Resource Centre
- Community Underwriting Small Grants Program
- Cumberland City Council
- Cumberland Council
- Denbigh Foundation
- Department of Communities and Justice
- Diana Gedeon and friends
- Diocese of Parramatta
- Donna Davis MP
- Dr Tracy McEwan
- Dress for Success
- Edmund Rice Centre for Justice (ERCJ)
- Epping Carlingford Parish
- Filling the Gap
- Finchley & Kent Pty
- Frenches Forest Parish
- Fujifilm Australia
- Georges River Life Church
- Ghaith Krayem
- Glow Up Careers
- Good Things Foundation Australia
- Good360
- Ha-ssiram Jesuits Prayer Group
- Hogan Family Foundation
- Holy Name of Mary Parish Hunters Hill
- Honorable Jodi Harrison
- House of Welcome
- Humans Like Us
- Immigrant Women Speak Out
- Impact100 Sydney
- Inner West 4 Refugees
- Jesuit Media Australia
- Knights of the Southern Cross
- Knights of the Southern Cross (Branch 90 Caboolture)
- Korean Chaplaincy Catholic Diocese of Broken Bay
- Kyrie Foundation
- Lead Connect – iShine Program
- Legal Aid NSW
- Leichhardt Uniting Church
- License4Work
- Life Without Barriers
- Linda George
- Lindfield Killara Parish
- Loreto Normanhurst
- Macquarie Bank Foundation
- Macquarie Community College
- Magnolia
- Manly Refugee Support Network
- Manning
- Marist Catholic College Penshurst
- Marist College North Shore
- Marist Sisters
- Mary Immaculate Primary School
- Mary Magdalene Parish Rose Bay
- Mater Maria Catholic College
- McClintock Family Fund
- Mercy Foundation
- Monte Sant' Angelo Mercy College
- Mother Teresa Primary, Westmead
- Mums4Refugees
- Musgrave Legacy Private Ancillary Fund
- Muslim Women Association
- National Advocay Group for Women on Temporary Visas Experiencing Violence
- North Sydney Parish
- Officeworks
- OneSight
- Osman Mah
- Our Lady Of Doules, Chatswood



# 18 our gratitude

- Our Lady of Lourdes Primary School, Seven Hills
- Our Lady of Lourdes, Baulkham Hills
- Our Lady of Mercy College, Parramatta
- Our Lady of Rosary, Kellyville (OLOR)
- Our Lady of the Way Parish, North Sydney
- Our Lady Queen of Peace Parish Greystanes
- Pandit Siva Srinivasan
- Pandit Venkatraman Shastri
- Parramatta Rice Club
- Parramatta Women's Shelter
- Patrician Brothers' College Blacktown
- Polaron
- Presentation Sisters Wagga Wagga
- Prof. John Smith
- Refugee Advice & Casework Service (RACS)
- Refugee Council of Australia (RCOA)
- Refugee English Language Tutoring
- Rev. Nabil Zakhary
- Rosebank College
- Saint Patrick's Cathedral
- Santa Sophia Catholic College, Gables
- Scots College
- Semakaleng Hinton
- Settlement Services International
- Shaikh Ahmed Abdu
- Share the Dignity
- Shatha Jojo
- Sister Susan
- Sisters of Charity Foundation
- Sisters of Mercy Parramatta
- Sisters of Saint Joseph and the Marist Sisters
- Sisters of St Joseph
- Sisters of the Good Samaritan
- St Aloysius College, Kirribilli
- St Aloysius Cronulla Parish
- St Ambrose, Concord West
- St Andrew the Apostle, Marayong
- St Angela's Primary School, Castle Hill
- St Anthony's Catholic Primary Clovelly
- St Anthony's Parish Marsfield
- St Anthony's PS Clovelly
- St Columba's Leichhardt Parish
- St Columba's Parish, Leichhardt North
- St Columba's Primary Leichhardt North
- St Declan's Parish, Penshurst
- St Finbars Catholic Parish, Glenbrook
- St Ignatius College Adelaide
- St Ignatius' College Athelstone
- St Ignatius College Riverview
- St Ignatius Parish Richmond
- St Joseph's Primary School Kingswood
- St Luke's Catholic College, Marsden Park
- St Luke's Catholic Parish, Marsden Park
- St Madeleine's Primary School, Kenthurst
- St Mary Mackillop Primary School, South Penrith
- St Marys Parish, Concord
- St Marys Primary School, Rydalmere
- St Michael's Parish, Baulkham Hills
- St Michaels Parish, Meadowbank
- St Patrick's Cathedral Parramatta Social Justice Group
- St Patrick's Catholic Parish Mortlake
- St Patrick's Catholic Primary
- St Patrick's College Strathfield
- St Patrick's Primary School, Parramatta
- St Pius X College Chatswood
- St Thomas Aquinas, Springwood
- St Ursula's College Kingsgrove
- St Vincent's College, Potts Point
- St. Anthony of Padua Catholic Church, Toongabbie
- St. Patrick's Guildford Manning Foundation
- Stella Maris College Manly
- Sydney Community Foundation
- Sydney East Community College
- The 1,000 NSW Public Sector Apprentices and Trainees Program
- The Antipodean Family Foundation
- The CAGES Foundation
- The Laptop Initiative
- The Magnolia Foundation
- The Musgrave Legacy
- The Reconnect Project
- The Social Outfit
- The Sparrow Foundation
- Thrive Refugee Enterprise
- Tom Davis Foundation
- Tricia Casey
- Turkan Aksoy
- Venerable Bom Hyon Sunim
- Waverley College
- Women and Girls Emergency Centre
- Xavier Catholic College, Llandilo
- Xavier College Kew

**Statement of Comprehensive Income for the year ended 31 December 2025**

|                                          |           |                  |
|------------------------------------------|-----------|------------------|
|                                          |           | <b>\$</b>        |
| <b>Revenue</b>                           |           | <b>2,611,034</b> |
| Donations                                | 1,576,845 |                  |
| Grants                                   | 923,092   |                  |
| Project funding                          | 65,523    |                  |
| Other income                             | 45,574    |                  |
| <b>Expenses</b>                          |           | <b>2,284,618</b> |
| Staffing expenses                        | 971,968   |                  |
| Administrative & fundraising expenses    | 194,269   |                  |
| Depreciation expenses                    | 21,593    |                  |
| Travel expenses                          | 8,688     |                  |
| Direct projects costs                    | 376,858   |                  |
| Grant expenses                           | 711,242   |                  |
| <b>Results from operating activities</b> |           | <b>326,416</b>   |
| Financial income                         |           | 65,906           |
| Financial costs                          |           | -262             |
| <b>Net financial income</b>              |           | <b>65,644</b>    |
| <b>Surplus for the period</b>            |           | <b>392,060</b>   |
| Other comprehensive income               |           | -                |
| <b>Total comprehensive surplus</b>       |           | <b>392,060</b>   |



Make a difference. *Please act now.*

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