

# ACTION KIT



*This action kit has been adapted from JRS Australia's Solidarity and Action toolkit with JRS Australia's permission*

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# ABOUT THIS ACTION KIT

"Migrants and refugees are not pawns on the chessboard of humanity. They are children, women and men who leave or who are forced to leave their homes for various reasons, who share a legitimate desire for knowing and having, but above all for being more." Pope Francis

Catholics for Refugees (C4R) is a movement in action. A movement of people who are committed to the social justice teachings of the Catholic church including treating everyone with the dignity and respect they deserve, and who know it is time to change the way we treat refugees and people seeking asylum. There are many aspects of Australia's treatment of refugees and asylum seeker families that runs contrary to the Gospel, Catholic social teaching and our own hearts. That's why so many Catholics have decided it is time we got together and took action to change the way we treat the world's most vulnerable people.

We hope this Action Kit gives you ideas and inspires you for actions you can take with your community to be part of the change. We look forward to hearing what you do!

# Host a Table Talk

A Table Talk is a powerful community expression of sharing, learning, and commitment to action on issues of social justice. It is a conversation with a local community and with people seeking asylum that emphasises respectful dialogue and mutual sharing of personal stories around values that are important to us.

Duration between 90 minutes and 2.5 hours.

## What does a Table Talk look like?

At each gathering, people seeking asylum and participants are invited to share their stories. The goal is to build solidarity, to find common ground in our shared values, and build the capacity of our organisations to stand with people seeking asylum.

## What we can provide:

- One or more people seeking asylum / refugees who are prepared to share their story.
- A suggested format for the conversation (with a focus on sharing stories and values).
- An expert on the issue to respond to participants' questions and reflections. Someone to facilitate, or co-facilitate with a local leader if desired.

## Participating groups are asked to:

- Turn out members to take part in the table talk and provide a venue and time to gather.
- Meet at least twice with Catholic for Refugee leaders beforehand to adapt the agenda to their community and values, and at least once afterwards for debriefing and follow up.
- Identify and bring together a small group of leaders willing to run small groups at the table talk (with training and support from Catholics for Refugees).
- We encourage community members to develop the skills to run community conversations on their own.



# Hold a letter writing night

Letters are a simple and effective way to engage MPs and are crucial to contribute to humane refugee policy reform. They provide a mandate for politicians to hear the voice of the community and to take action.

First, identify your federal electorate and MP through the Australian Electoral Office's website:  
<http://apps.aec.gov.au/eseach/Default.aspx>

## What does it look like?

- Host a letter writing night with your parish or community.
- Identify your electorate and MP Branch off into smaller groups of 3 people to create a letter for your MP.

## Make your letter stand out by keeping it brief:

1. Introduce yourself (name and address, they will pay more attention if you fall in their electorate).
2. Introduce your issue (s) (choose one or two). Use your own words by making it personal.
3. Ask them a simple, focused question that requires a personal response.
4. Tell them the action that you want them to take
5. Leave your contact details.

**Tips: Include relevant facts.**

## Some important things to include:

- Refer to recent news, or recent statements made by the MP or their party.
- Include a personal experience.
- Highlight a local connection, this invites the MP to step in for their community.



Many federal politicians have deliberately avoided confronting the moral issues of our current refugee policy, particularly their own part in them as Australia's lawmakers. Be patient and await their response and follow up.

## If they respond:

- It's always good to write a thank you letter, especially if you're happy with their response, if you're not satisfied, write back and ask them to follow up in more detail. They're there to represent you!
- Important: Be persistent. Raising issues as a 'grassroots' constituent can have a very powerful and personal impact on both those involved and MPs.



# Stage a Circle of Silence

The Circle of Silence movement originated in 2007 among the Franciscans of Toulouse, France as a peaceful way of raising awareness of the plight of refugees and showing solidarity with them. Since then, the movement has spread to Malta, Spain, and Britain, bringing empathetic people together to express solidarity with people seeking asylum, refugees, and migrants facing injustice and harm.

## What does it look like:

- A Circle of Silence involves a group of people standing in a circle in a public space, in silence for 20 – 60 minutes.
- Participants can range from 5 – 10 people up to hundreds and can take place in a school, church, park or any large public place.

## Tips:

1. Begin and conclude the Circle of Silence with a personal testimony from a refugee or migrant about their experience, a story from a participant or a reflection, prayer, or relevant passage.
2. Participants can hold candles, signs, placards or banners.
3. Participants can also tape their mouths or cross their hands in solidarity with those who have been silenced.
4. Remember to have one or two people handing out flyers to passers-by to explain the purpose of the Circle of Silence. Take a photograph or a video and share it at the end so that others can be inspired from your experience.



# Host a film screening

Films are a powerful way to raise awareness about the remarkable stories of refugees and people seeking asylum, and the life-threatening circumstances that many encounter. The images, faces, and narratives stay with us for years.

We invite you to host a film screening or movie marathon at your house, in church, at school, or even at a cinema.

- Sell tickets and snacks so that money can be donated to support refugees and people seeking asylum
- Another twist to this familiar and easy event is to ask friends and family to each host their own mini-film screening on behalf of your cause and invite their own networks.

**Note:** the film night can also be accompanied by a panel discussion, a call to action, and a commitment to doing something more over a period of time.

## Films to watch:

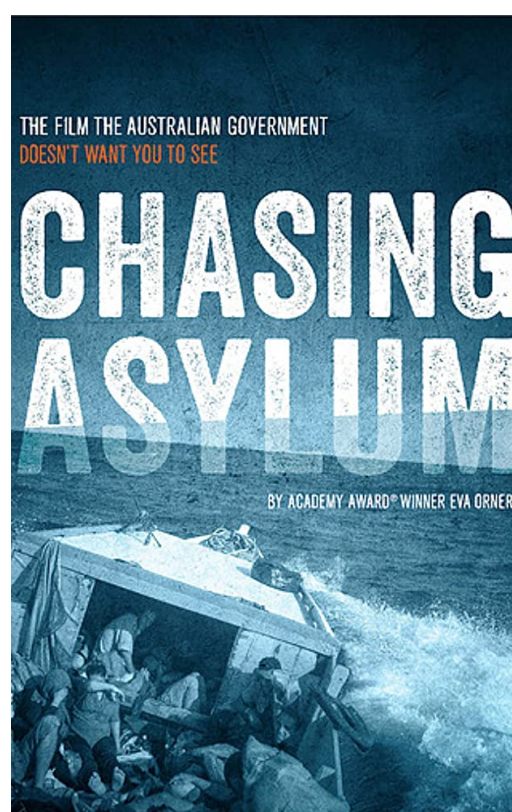
The Staging Post, Between the Devil and the Deep Blue Sea, Mary Meets Mohammed and Chasing Asylum.

## How C4R can help

- Suggest films to watch and help you obtain the film, help you organise the screening, promote it, support you on the night, help you organise a panel discussion with leaders from refugee or asylum backgrounds, help you issue a call to action.

## Tips for running this action:

- Coordination: Each event must have at least 1 designated leader in charge.
- Checklist: Make a list of resources needed, e.g. refreshments, cash box, music, materials, etc. Please use recycled materials where possible.
- Promote your event and photos in social media: Spread the word about your fundraiser and ask your friends and family to get involved.
- Show your friends that you care about refugees and people seeking asylum.
- Praying and reflection: We invite you to start your event with a prayer for refugees.



# Meet your local Member of Parliament (MP)

Meeting with your MP or even their staff ensures your voice is heard. It also sends a very powerful message to them that the local community cares about the treatment of people on the move.

It can be nerve wracking to contact your MP – particularly if you've never done it before. But don't worry! Thousands of people contact their MP every week. It's what they are there for.

## Planning your MP meeting

1. MPs can only represent you if you live in their constituency, type your postcode to find out who your MP is at <https://www.openaustralia.org.au/>
  2. The most effective way to engage is to phone up their office and make an appointment to meet face-to-face.
- Learn a bit about your MP: the more you know about your MP, the more you can tailor your correspondence.
  - For example, what party do they belong to? Have they spoken about refugees and asylum seekers before? What do they have in common with you? Do you share faith? Common city/region of residence? Professional experience?
  - Consider the issues you would like to discuss and who you would like in the meeting.

## 3. Make an Appointment:

- Contact your MP's office by email or post, explain who you are and represent, and mention where you live in the electorate.
- Explain what your group would like to talk about in a courteous manner.
- Follow up on the same day or the day after with a phone call to the electorate office. Notify the staff member that you have written asking for an appointment and would like to discuss a suitable time or day within a particular time frame (eg. In the next month or before the next sitting period). They will ask for your contact details and likely contact you after speaking with their team. If you have not heard back within 7 – 10 days, feel free to call them again.

## 4. How Catholics for Refugees can help you:

- C4R can share stories, statistics, and information to help you focus one or two key issues.
- C4R can also support you to build a delegation by providing an expert and contacting a leader with lived experience to accompany you.
- We can help you prepare a clear meeting agenda and script for a 20, 30 or 40 minute meeting and a clear ASK for the MP.

# Meet your local Member of Parliament (MP)

## During the Meeting

- Usual meeting duration is 20 – 30 minutes, which means that the first few minutes will be taken up by introductions and thanks.
- After this you will have the opportunity to follow your planned template/script.
- Highlight the key issues through prepared stories and information, and provide time and space for the MP to respond. MPs are human beings, be polite and respectful, even if you disagree with what they are saying. Be sure to listen, reflect, and respond calmly without starting an argument.
- Like any relationship, it often takes multiple meetings (sometimes 5+) to build a robust relationship.

In Conclusion, ensure that you leave 2 – 3 minutes at the end in which you ask the MP to do something towards addressing the issue raised.

- E.g. asking him/her to raise the issue with the relevant Minister or with fellow MPs, to make a speech or raise a question in Parliament, and to agree to a follow up meeting.



# Help employ a person seeking asylum

Through expert asylum support agencies such as JRS Australia and House of Welcome, we know of many people seeking asylum who are looking for employment.

Both organisations run programs on resume development, workshops on working in Australia, employee rights and responsibilities, interview skills and a range of other employment related services.

Barriers to employment for people seeking asylum often include:

- English-language proficiency
- Mental and physical health issues
- Lack of Australian work experience and lack of overseas skills recognition
- Inaccessibility to childcare services

Australians in our community could therefore make a tangible difference in the lives of people seeking asylum by lending their skills and engaging with the talents of people seeking asylum to facilitate employment.

- Jobs and training through social enterprises.
- Training and employment through social enterprise is a fantastic way for people seeking asylum to begin their working lives in Australia.
- Placements are often 6-12 months and include an element of training to accompany practical work.
- Empowered to Work has made connections with social enterprises that support people to become bakers, hospitality professionals, designers, call centre workers and warehousing experts.



We are calling on the community to nominate a social enterprise they know of who would consider employing someone (including paid internship opportunities) from the Empowered to Work project.

Alternately, if you are a small business owner or know of one who would be interested in employing someone at the end of their placement, please get in touch.

## Contact:

**Tamana Mirzada, Employment Coordinator**  
**Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS) Australia**  
**([tamana.mirzada@jrs.org.au](mailto:tamana.mirzada@jrs.org.au))**

or

**Leonie Dyer, Employment Services Manager**  
**House of Welcome**  
**([l.dyer@houseofwelcome.com.au](mailto:l.dyer@houseofwelcome.com.au)) for more information**

# Other ways to support people in need

## 1. Donation stand at Church entrance

- The stand includes all details regarding Catholics for Refugees, donation boxes, details to donate online/via text, paywave options.
- One or two young volunteers to run the stand.
- Options to donate once/monthly.
- With permission of the Parish one of the volunteers explains the donation stand to the Parish at the end of the Mass, or perhaps a simple video is shown.
- Raffle included in the stand with prize.

## 2. Food Drives: pasta, rice, canned

- Protein foods, blankets, financial donations too etc,
- 3 x per year e.g. Lent, June 20 World Refugee Day, Christmas.

## 3. Organise a community lunch after Mass

- Offering “buy a lunch, give a lunch”, pricing the food slightly higher than average to support your cause.
- Alternative idea: You can combine these three into a big ‘jumble’ drive/sale where books, shoes, and clothes are sold.
- You could also use this more casual event to do some advocacy.
- For example have people sign a petition, write a letter or take home a flyer with information about a campaign.

## 4. Host a movie night

- Requires a projector, family-friendly movie and large space, potentially to be held in the Church or Parish hall.
- Sell tickets, popcorn and snacks (buy in bulk to make a profit).
- Peer-to-peer fundraising page is to call supporters/congregation members to fundraise on behalf of your organization.





# Get creative and organise your own events!

Have another idea in mind? That's great! Go for it and we are here to support you in your efforts every step of the way. Just get in touch!



# **Keep us in the loop with what you're doing!**

We would love to hear what actions your group is taking!

Email us your stories, updates and photos to  
[jpoinfo@sydneycatholic.org](mailto:jpoinfo@sydneycatholic.org) or  
[zoe.grant@jrs.org.au](mailto:zoe.grant@jrs.org.au)

Thank you for standing with refugees and people seeking asylum.

Together, we can make a difference.