



Catholics for Refugees

Catholics for Refugees join in congratulating new president of Refugee Council

Catholics for Refugees are delighted to join with many justice groups in congratulating Jasmina Bajaktaric-Hayward on her election as the new head of the Australian Refugee Council.

“This is an historic moment in the history of our country”, said Julie Macken, from **Catholics for Refugees**. “As millions of us have grieved, watching our country’s inhumane treatment of refugees, we know that Australia needs a new heart and a new way to show mercy – for those urgently seeking safety as they try to escape Afghanistan at this moment, and for those already in Australia, suffering under this country’s injustice and cruelty. Jasmina’s election gives fresh hope for new possibilities.”

In September, Australians watched the Kabul airport fill with fear, bombs and those desperately seeking safety, and we knew we were watching the beginning of life on the road for thousands of people. In more recent days, the desperation and distress of people seeking safety on the borders of Belarus has only increased the sense of urgency and our anguish and grief at our Government’s obduracy.

“Jasmina comes from a background with direct experience of such desperation,” said Jan Barnett from the Josephite Justice Network. “It will be an enormous honour to be able to work with her and the Refugee Council to urge a change of heart and a change of policy from this Government,”. We believe that in working together, we can and must achieve real difference.”

- To bring to Australia **those Afghans who aided us during the conflict**, and give **additional places to Afghan refugees**, including the families of people already here.
- To provide **income support** and a **financial safety net** for all people seeking asylum in Australia
- To **end temporary protection visas** and create a clear pathway to **permanent residency**
- To ensure access to **family reunion** for refugees and people seeking asylum in Australia.”

With thousands of justice groups and individuals across this country, **Catholics for Refugees** will urge a clear shift in policy as Australians prepare for the Federal Election.

“Jasmina’s unique and real understanding of refugees’ experience is an opportune moment for all of us,” said Fr Peter Smith, promoter of Justice and Peace. “Her election has provided an impetus for all of us to accelerate our combined efforts at this critical moment in our history.”