

PROVIDING FINANCIAL AND MATERIAL AID

This note has been prepared to assist parishes in providing financial and material support for asylum seekers and refugees.

Asylum seekers and refugees often arrive in our communities with few resources other than their families, their life experiences, and the clothes they wear. In addition, many are not eligible for income support while in Australia. They need our help to meet their immediate living requirements and to achieve a basic standard of living. Many parishioners and parishes are very generous, regularly providing financial and material support to asylum seekers and other groups. What your parish undertakes to provide will depend upon your parish's human and financial capacities, and how you feel called to give.

Support can be provided in many ways:

- fundraising within the parish (consider trivia nights, collection drives), and providing the funds raised towards:
 - rental support for a family or individual, either within the parish or another parish
 - assisting with utilities or other living expenses bills of asylum seekers
 - supporting one of the agencies helping asylum seekers such as the Brigidine Asylum Seeker Project, Vinnies, Asylum Seeker Resource Centre (ASRC) – see our [website](#) for contact details and a full list.
- collecting non-perishable food and other items and making them available directly to asylum seekers, or other parishes or agencies supporting asylum seekers, as above
- contributing kitchenware, blankets, furniture, bicycles, toys and the like.

*"Freely you have received,
freely give" (Matthew 10:8).*

*"Whoever sows sparingly
will also reap sparingly, and
whoever sows generously
will also reap generously.
Each of you should give what
you have decided in your
heart to give, not reluctantly
or under compulsion, for
God loves a cheerful giver"
(2 Corinthians 9:6,7).*

A great example of parish support is provided by the St Thomas the Apostle Parish, Blackburn. The Social Justice Action Group organises an annual collection of Food and Living Essentials for distribution. Items collected are boxed and delivered by the parish to the Brigidine Asylum Seeker Project, the ASRC or other groups helping asylum seekers and refugees. In March, 2015, the parish collected over \$6,000 worth of items for distribution to asylum seekers and refugees.

The *Welcome the Asylum Seeker Parish Support Program* links parishes wishing to provide support with parishes and agencies already supporting asylum seekers. Please contact us for more information or support at Adrian.foley@css.org.au