

Amended March 2017

VOLUNTEERING TO SUPPORT PEOPLE SEEKING ASYLUM

Purpose

These notes have been prepared for

- parishioners thinking of volunteering to support people seeking asylum, and
- Catholic parishes engaging volunteers to provide support to people seeking asylum.

Why Volunteer?

Volunteering is a very rewarding way to be involved in our parishes and communities. Many of us have the time, energy and skills to make a difference in the lives of others.

We may be tempted to think that government should respond to the social needs that cross our path. However, many needs are not met by government. As St Mary MacKillop said "never see a need without doing something about it"

For centuries Christians and others have provided a vast range of services to their communities that would not have been possible without the dedicated service of volunteers. This remains true today - without volunteers the capacity of the Church and society to reach out to those in need would be greatly limited.

If you have the time and capacity to volunteer your services, please prayerfully consider how you may be able to contribute to the work of your parish or community.

Successful Volunteering

Successful volunteering occurs where there is a match between the interests and capabilities of the volunteer and the task required. Consider how you can best make a difference, using your skills and interests. It doesn't have to be in just one area of support. This depends on the time that you have available, and your interests.

Volunteer in your Parish

You may be able to help by establishing or joining a group in your parish to raise local awareness of the issue, to help people seeking asylum directly, or to raise funds for agencies engaged in this work. Remember that you are not just an individual. By joining with others in the parish, you can help represent the Church outreach in your locality. Parishes already help in many ways, including providing -

- accommodation or funds for rent of accommodation
- raising funds and donating them to support agencies who support asylum seekers
- direct financial and material support

- hospitality, including support with English language
- advocacy on behalf of individual people seeking asylum or for special causes such as the *Let Them Stay* campaign

For more suggestions, see our note *What parishes can do to support people seeking asylum and refugees* at <http://www.css.org.au/Welcome-The-Asylum-Seeker-Parish-Support>.

Volunteer with an asylum seeker support agency

See the Attachment for a list of agencies that engage volunteers to provide support for people seeking asylum and refugees, and consider how you may be able to help.

Checks

To ensure the protection of people you will be working with, you may be required to obtain a [Police check](#) and a [Working with Children](#) check. The organisation you will be working with will advise you on this.

The Catholic Archdiocese of Melbourne and all parishes have Child Safety Policies and Codes of Conduct to ensure the care, safety and wellbeing of all children and young people in our care. Everyone employed or volunteering in parishes has a responsibility to understand the important and significant role he/she plays to ensure that the wellbeing and safety of all children is at the forefront of all they do and every decision they make. Please refer to your Parish's Child Safety Policy and Code of Conduct for more information.

Your rights and responsibilities

Each organisation that engages volunteers will have their own policies concerning volunteers. You should enquire what your parish's policies are.

Need Help?

Contact Adrian Foley at adrian.foley@css.org.au for further help.

ATTACHMENT

Organisations Providing Services To People Seeking Asylum

| Organisation | Web address | Functions |
|---|--|---|
| AMES | www.ames.net.au | Helps to settle migrants and refugees |
| Asylum Seeker Resource Centre | www.asrc.org.au | Provide aid, legal and health services to people seeking asylum in Australia |
| Australian Red Cross | www.redcross.org.au | Prevent or reduce human suffering, wherever it is found |
| BaptCare Sanctuary | http://www.baptcare.org.au/ | Partnering for fullness of life with people of all ages, cultures, beliefs and circumstances. |
| Brigidine Asylum Seeker Project | www.basp.org.au | Provide hospitality and support, advocate and educate on behalf of asylum seekers |
| Catholic Alliance for People Seeking Asylum (CAPSA) | www.capsa.org.au | Advocate for policy changes to better uphold the dignity and rights of each person seeking asylum. |
| Catholic Social Services Victoria | www.cssv.org.au | Stand with those who are poor, disadvantaged or marginalised, work for a more just and compassionate society |
| Jesuit Social Services Victoria | www.jss.org.au | Work to build a just society, bring marginalised people back into our community, and stand by them as they develop their potential. |
| Mercy Connect | http://mercyworks.org.au/ | Train and support volunteers to assist school students and their families settle in Australia |
| Vinnies (St Vincent de Paul Society) | https://www.vinnies.org.au/ | Serve Christ in the poor, and work for a more just and compassionate society. |
| Wellsprings for Women, Dandenong | www.wellspringsforwomen.com | A vibrant, welcoming place for isolated women to gather for social connection and to encourage lifelong learning |