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MEDIA RELEASE

World Day of Migrants and Refugees

This year on World Day of Migrants and Refugees, the National Council of St Vincent de Paul celebrates the significant contribution of migrants and refugees to the Australian community and calls on the Federal Government to step up efforts to ease the suffering of many, especially in the wake of the Afghanistan Crisis, which has starkly exposed the true brutality of indefinite temporary visas.

National President, Claire Victory noted that Pope Francis says ‘we are all in the same boat and called to work together, so that there will be no more walls that separate us, no longer ‘others’, but only a single ‘we’, encompassing all of humanity’.

‘The security situation in Afghanistan demands that we must give permanent protection to 4,300 Afghans already here but still on temporary visas, and we must give at least 20,000 additional places to Afghan refugees including family members of all Afghans already here,’ Ms Victory said.

‘Afghans still on temporary visas after 10 years remain in indefinite limbo, or more accurately purgatory, with no permanent home and no chance to re-unite with their family.

‘Beyond the Afghan crisis, the National Council continues its call for policy changes that would allow a more compassionate welcome for asylum seekers and new migrants more generally, including the rejection of legislative change that will force new migrants to wait four years to access critical social services payments.

Supporting people, as they fight an intrinsically unfair process, with many left destitute because they are unable to access Government benefits, has been one of the toughest challenges for Vinnies and other refugee support organisations in the last five years.

‘Over 20,000 refugees are still on temporary visas, unable to bring their families here and another 10,000 people are still struggling through a refugee application process, condemned as unfair by the Australian Human Rights Commission.

‘The problems facing refugees on temporary visas for nearly a decade have become more acute recently. As their visas expire, they must struggle through the same, unfair application process a second time, compounding their insecurity and stress,’ Ms Victory said.

The National Council continues its advocacy through a number of campaigns, including Christians United for Afghanistan – an unprecedented coalition of Christian organisations including Anglicans, Baptists, Catholics, Pentecostals and the Uniting Church.

The Australian Catholic Migrant and Refugee Office produced a [resource kit](#) to help parishes and other church communities celebrate World Day of Migrants and Refugees.

Tim McKenna, Chair Vincentian Refugee Network [speech](#) to the Archdiocese of Canberra Goulburn.

The St Vincent de Paul Society in Australia consists of 60,000 members and volunteers who operate on the ground through over 1,000 groups located in local communities across the country.

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