

## **Thank you - your support represents the spirit of welcome in this country**

Dear St Pius X Community,

On behalf of the entire JRS Australia family, I am writing to say thank you for the incredible work your school has done to support people seeking asylum, refugees, and migrants in vulnerable situations. We deeply appreciate the generosity you have all shown in supporting the Foodbank drive organised in conjunction with Our Lady of Dolours Parish.

During the last few months people seeking asylum have lost their jobs, have no access to Federal Government support, and cannot return home because Australia is still processing their claims for protection, often more than five years after they first arrived.

These women, children and men have lived, worked, studied, prayed and paid their taxes for years, and it is only because of the generosity, kindness, and welcoming spirit of communities such as St Pius X College that they are surviving in their hour of need.

As a result of the support from St Pius X College and elsewhere, JRS Australia is:

- Distributing food to up to 750 women, children, and men per week.
- Meeting a 161% increase in demand for financial relief for rent, medications, and other essentials since 1 April 2020.
- Speaking to an average of 35 women on temporary visas at risk of or experiencing domestic or family violence, and supporting them in some way.

Schools and parishes have also contacted State and Federal decision-makers, contributing significantly to raising awareness of the issues amongst our political leaders, and letting them know we care.

The need for support and action will not go away quickly. Numerous studies show that people seeking asylum find it harder to secure work in Australia and will probably be the last ones to get back into employment after the COVID 19 crisis. Not because they are less qualified or able, but because their qualifications are not accepted as valid prerequisites, their short term Bridging Visas are not recognised by employers, because they experience discrimination and prejudice or because other people will be prioritised for jobs post COVID 19.

The community's work on the ground will remain crucial for a long time, as will the need for Catholics and others to hold their decision-makers to account.

In this context, I would like to thank the St Pius College community and invite you to continue your engagement in a number of ways.

First, I would love to welcome the St Pius College community to JRS' Centre in Westmead to personally say thank you, to show you how your support is making a difference and share the work JRS Australia does. At the centre, we provide casework, emergency relief, legal assistance, employment support, youth programs, English classes, community gardening and other activities for the people we

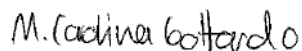
serve.

Second, we would like to invite leaders in the St Pius College community who are interested in being more involved in responding to the situation for people seeking asylum and refugees in Australia to an initial conversation with leaders from other parishes or schools on what ongoing action might look like.

To organise to have a tour at JRS' centre and/or to join a conversation with other Catholic leaders in your local area contact Zoe Grant at [zoe.grant@jrs.org.au](mailto:zoe.grant@jrs.org.au)

Thank you again for your wonderful support. Please be assured that the refugees, people seeking asylum, and migrants in vulnerable situations with whom we work will be immensely grateful for your support, which signals your care and friendship. This makes a great difference to their lives. We look forward to hearing from you soon.

With gratitude,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "M. Carolina Gottardo". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Carolina Gottardo  
Director  
Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS) Australia