



*Canberra Refugee Support Inc*

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## **BACKGROUND BRIEF**

### **The Organisation**

Canberra Refugee Support is a community association with no political or other affiliations. We work with a wide range of refugee stakeholders.

We are incorporated in the ACT and publicly accountable as a result. We are a not-for-profit organisation and all of the members work on a part-time basis in a voluntary capacity.

We do not have an office or employees so our overheads are very low.

Canberra Refugee Support is a member organisation of the Refugee Council of Australia.

### **Aim**

Our aim is to help asylum seekers and refugees become *as independent as possible as soon as possible*.

That is sometimes difficult for people who are living with the uncertainty of a temporary visa and those who are denied the right to work. Nevertheless our members are able to offer compassionate support and help to work towards a positive outcome.

### **What do we do?**

The role of Canberra Refugee Support is to provide support to refugees including:

- a. assisting refugees to settle in Canberra;
- b. providing advocacy; and
- c. providing policy advice.

Canberra Refugee Support considers the achievement of these tasks as an important contribution in assisting refugees and asylum seekers to settle into Australia.

To achieve these tasks, we:

- conduct orientation courses;
- conduct settlement and provide ongoing support to asylum seekers and refugees;
- provide advocacy services to assist refugees through the “maze” that has been created around visas and other Australian institutions; and
- provide ongoing contact with policy makers and their advisors so that we can improve the level of equity and access for asylum seekers and refugees.

Each year we provide thousands of hours supporting refugees. We roughly average 1+ new case per month, but this is not consistent and cases often seem to come in clusters. We have about 20 “active” cases at any one time as well as some ‘legacy cases (clients that have moved on but return or are long term)

We also help others to make connections with refugees. This includes fostering activities and programs such as providing refugee scholarships and refugee mentoring programs. We provide practical support to assist with accommodation, the provision of furniture, linking into local services, access to schooling and English language training, health care, jobs and networking in the Canberra community.

**We have sponsored a Refugee Mentoring Program at Calvary Hospital and this is assisting refugees to orient to an Australian work-place and decide what future study is best for them.**

**More information is available at <http://www.calvary-act.com.au/refugee-mentoring-program.html>**

We assist to provide the stability and security many families have been denied in their country of origin. This is one of the more important tasks that we undertake and it is especially important for the people who have been traumatised.

We are conscious that we are dealing with vulnerable people, and our members that work with refugees and asylum seekers must have been granted an ACT Government Working With Vulnerable People clearance. We conduct our business in accordance with the attached Good Practice Guide.

## **Funds**

We also help to support refugees financially where we can. We make judgements as to our involvement with refugees on the basis of their need and our capacity to assist but not on the visa type that may be involved.

We are recognised by the Australian Tax Office as a charitable organisation and donations are tax deductible. We are not funded by government; we raise funds through a range of activities and by donations to help asylum seekers and refugees.

We only spend what we have: we do not commit beyond our resources, although we do on occasion accept projects that require funds to be raised.

Typically, but not exhaustively, we spend money on the following:

- Administration: this mounts to only Insurance, our website and our Post Office Box
- Scholarships
- Support to clients that includes items such as:
  - Driving instruction
  - Legal fees
  - Education
  - Campaigns to reunite families

**The purpose of the Canberra Refugee Support Scholarships is to recognise meritorious performance and to encourage and support outstanding refugee students in the pursuit of their personal development goals. The program is funded from donations provided from the community or organisations**

**Scholarships are awarded to Asylum Seekers or Refugees who are studying or seeking to study at CIT, IEC or at other institutions while they are living in Canberra. They are selected on the basis of meritorious performance rather than**

Our sources of funds are:

- Donations
- Fund raising Dinners
- Recitals
- Public Campaigns (particularly for family reunion)

## **The People**

Our members are concerned humanitarians. We come from all walks of life and circumstances. The common thread is that we care about other people and want to help them to establish themselves in our community. Some just provide “moral” support rather than active involvement

There are no prerequisites excepting that members must be at least 18 years old – there are no other criteria for membership. Our membership is currently about 200, ranging in age from early 20s to 70s. About two thirds of the members are female.

Members may have professional qualifications (law, psychology, medicine etc) but these are not provided as part of CRS services – we are not insured or structured for this sort of support, which is provided by other professional organisations such as Companion House.