

A photograph of a woman and a young girl, both wearing hijabs, smiling warmly at each other. The woman is in the foreground, looking towards the girl, who is slightly behind her. They are outdoors, with a blurred background of green foliage and warm, golden light filtering through, suggesting a sunset or sunrise. The overall mood is joyful and hopeful.

ACRT

AUSTRALIAN CHURCHES
REFUGEE TASKFORCE

**A CHRISTIAN VISION OF
COMPASSION AND HOSPITALITY
FOR ASYLUM SEEKERS AND REFUGEES**

Australian Churches Refugee Taskforce



Document 5.0

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AUSTRALIAN CHURCHES REFUGEE TASKFORCE

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ACRT AUSTRALIAN CHURCHES REFUGEE TASKFORCE

A CHRISTIAN VISION OF COMPASSION AND HOSPITALITY FOR ASYLUM SEEKERS AND REFUGEES



From Lisa Button, Director of the Community Refugee Sponsorship Initiative

I am delighted to be able to share with you the latest publication of the Community Refugee Sponsorship Initiative (CRSI): A New Model for Community Refugee Sponsorship in Australia. This is our most comprehensive policy paper yet and is inspired by the Canadian sponsorship scheme which has seen more than 300,000 refugees welcomed and settled in Canada in the last 40 years through sponsorship by community groups (including faith groups, sporting clubs, universities and workplaces) in addition to those settled under the government-funded resettlement program. As the name suggests, this paper outlines in

Australian Churches Refugee Taskforce

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Background:

- Established by the NCCA in 2011
- Moved under Act For Peace in 2017
- Executive Committee and Steering Committee established to give oversight
- An Executive Officer (PT) and operational budget provided by AfP



Why was ACRT created?

As Christians we believe:

- All people are created in the image of God
- Jesus commands us to love our neighbour
- The Bible teaches us to welcome the stranger and show hospitality
- We are called to challenge unjust systems, to stand with and care for those who are marginalised, oppressed and persecuted



Key areas:

- **Coordinate** and communicate with churches
- Offer a strong moral **voice**
- **Information** sharing across churches in Australia
- Lead Australian churches in coordinated **campaigning and advocacy**
- **Collaborate** with existing networks in the Australian refugee sector



What has been happening?

- Campaigns:
 - Let Them Stay, No Business in Abuse, Dignity not Destitution, Kids off Nauru
- Churches Sanctuary Movement
- Numerous media releases and communications
- A resource guide for hosting asylum seekers and refugees
- Initiation of the Manus humanitarian program to support refugee men and local churches in Manus Island



What does ACRT do?

- Monthly teleconference for members
 - ✓ Sharing among members actively involved in supporting refugees and asylum seekers
 - ✓ Sharing information from sector meetings
 - ✓ Monitoring the political and social context
 - ✓ Developing communications for sharing
- Participation in sector events
 - ✓ Palm Sunday
 - ✓ Refugee Alternatives Conference
- Annual face-to-face meeting to review and plan for the next year



Some observations:

- There is not a great deal of buy-in to ACRT from most NCCA Member Churches
- Member Churches mainly send practitioners rather than decision-makers or communicators
- Most Member Churches do not pick up and further amplify the work of ACRT
- Some Member Churches have groups and Church Leaders who are active in advocacy on this matter but not through ACRT
- NCCA policy positions on these issues are now quite old
- ACRT offers a place for people to share and support each other ecumenically
- ACRT is well served by an experienced Executive Officer

Questions?

- How do Member Churches feel about ACRT and its work?
- Does the NCCA need to have a group like ACRT?
- Is an ecumenical voice and action important in this area?
- Should this be a standalone issue or part of a broader NCCA focus?
- Is the current model, working within AfP the best way to approach this issue?