

Blue Mountains Deanery Pastoral Council.

A Chance to Stand up for Refugees and Asylum Seekers.

Recently our Diocese celebrated World Day of Migrants and Refugees at a special family friendly gathering at Blacktown. But there is more we can do. Please read Kon's request below and then you are encouraged to sign the petition to help refugees and asylum seekers. You can sign the petition online through our website.

Maureen and Carol.

Deanery Pastoral Council.

"When I was growing up in regional Victoria, we were one of only two Greek families in the whole town. Everyone else was Smith and Jones and I was Karapanagiotidis.

Today, one in two Australians have at least one parent who is a migrant. One in three of us were born overseas.

And no matter where our families come from, how we got here or what language we speak at home, most of us just want a fair go and a chance to build a better life for our families.

But right now, unfair visa conditions mean that refugees and people seeking asylum can be denied the right to work, study or access fair social safety nets when they need them.

Sign the petition here <https://action.asrc.org.au/>

Education was so precious to my family, but my parents never got a chance to have it. I was the first in my family to go to high school and university.

It's heartbreaking to see young peoples' dreams of higher education shattered by unfair visa conditions or exclusion from HECS-HELP loans, because they or their parents came here in search of safety.

Based on their grades, young people we've accepted as refugees from places like Afghanistan could be applying for their dream uni courses right now. Given a chance, they could be filling critical skills shortages in a few short years.

Instead, temporary visas are locking them out of HECS-HELP loans that can bring a life-changing education within reach. Astronomical fees mean most will never see university.

It's just wrong that even when visa conditions allow people seeking asylum to work, they are still denied access to mainstream social safety nets that exist to help us rebuild and recover from life's challenges.

At a time when Australia is desperate for workers, the end result is that people whose resilience, work ethic and courage helped them survive war and violence are being forced to rely on charities like the ASRC.

With employers struggling to fill jobs in critical industries, simplifying visa

conditions to allow all refugees and people seeking asylum the right to work or study should be an easy “win-win” for the new government.

But certain politicians and commentators are treating this national conversation about skills shortages as an opportunity to divide us against each other, by pointing the finger at refugees and migrants.

The truth is that whether we or our ancestors are First Nations people, or came here by sea or sky, it’s when we join together across our differences and hold decision makers to account that we can make a better, fairer future for everyone.

- Can you sign our petition calling for all refugees and people seeking asylum to be allowed to work, study and access mainstream social safety nets?

Every day at the ASRC, we see the energy and determination of refugees and people seeking asylum to secure decent work, develop professional networks or start businesses.

Today, please join with me to call on the new government to unleash the full potential of this incredible community, by including all refugees and people seeking asylum in the right to work, the right to study and the right to rebuild.

In solidarity,

Kon Karapanagiotidis OAM

CEO and Founder,

"Asylum Seeker Resource Centre"