



Refugee Council of Australia

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REFUGEE WEEK MARKS SEARCH FOR FREEDOM FROM FEAR

Every year, across the world, the incredible journeys and contributions of refugees are marked in Refugee Week. In Australia this is celebrated from June 19 to 25 with this year's theme being "Freedom from Fear".

The Refugee Council of Australia (RCOA) is the national coordinating body for this week of celebrations and joins the global community in celebrating World Refugee Day on 20 June.

"The fact that we have more than 150 community events registered across Australia marking Refugee Week shows the breadth of support and warmth in our towns, cities and suburbs," Paul Power, RCOA chief executive officer, said,

"Australia has a proud history of settling refugees, having received more than 750,000 refugees since Federation. Our settlement support for newly arrived refugees is world-renowned. Every day communities are working to ensure that people's lives are free from fear."

"Disappointingly in Australia we see different forms of fear being fostered. Fear through misinformation and for political posturing. All of this belies the positive realities of refugees living, working, studying and being part of our communities across the country."

"Refugee Week is a real opportunity for all of us to hear from former refugees, to consider and reflect on the human stories behind each journey."

"Last week RCOA was the proud co-host of a Conference marking 60 years of the Refugee Convention. Throughout the conference, former refugees presented their stories, shared their experiences and shared academic podiums with experts from across the region. We hope Refugee Week brings a much wider audience in contact with the inspiring stories of refugees and asylum seekers."

"RCOA provided background information for this week's much anticipated SBS series, *Go Back To Where You Came From*. We are very excited about the flow on impacts of this series, in particular the take up of a secondary schools teaching resource we co-produced."

Abdul Kargbo

At 11 years of age Abdul fled his Sierra Leone village along with, his brother and sister. They hid, fended for themselves and lived in a refugee camp for a total of five years. Their parents were killed when rebels entered their village. After five years of uncertainty and being on the move, Abdul and his siblings were granted protection in Australia. Now 19 years of age and after English language study, Abdul has elected to attend Menai High School in Sydney where he is currently in Year 11. Abdul's quest for peace and his endeavours in the Australian community have earned him recognition. He has initiated a project that will see fellow school students travel to a remote NSW Aboriginal community for cultural exchange, skill sharing and to develop an ongoing relationship.

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The Refugee Council of Australia represents
non-government organisations and
individuals working with and for refugees
in Australia and around the world

Joseph Youhana

Joseph fled Iraq with his family in 2004. After more than two years in Syria, Joseph and his family received protection and settlement in Australia. On arrival, Joseph received support from AMES refugee settlement service in Melbourne. Joseph did volunteer work in the refugee sector, community projects and commenced making local connections. In late 2008 Joseph became an AMES employee and is now a housing worker and AMEP counsellor (involved in assisting new arrivals who are eligible for English language classes). He works to assist newly arrived refugees, and those released from immigration detention to live in Australia free from fear. These fears can often be about housing, employment, trauma and language barriers.

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