

In this COVID-19 world much has changed for all of us. We have all experienced isolation, uncertainty and insecurity but asylum seekers have been especially hard hit. Many had insecure casual work in hospitality services, Uber driving and construction, and since the lockdown many have lost those jobs. None of them currently have access to any benefits (such as Job Seeker, Job Keeper or rent assistance) when they lose their work. Others have never even had the right to work. Many have little or no income – ASRC reports that 94% of those seeking their help have NO income whatsoever.

These people are affected in many ways, including loss of jobs or reduced hours. They still need to eat, pay rent, travel for medical appointments or job interviews. Their children may be learning at home without the technology to take part in online classes. Some who have been here for some years have connections through school, religious groups and neighbours, but still their income has disappeared.

We have helped where we could. Some have needed money for food and household expenses. We have helped with online course fees needed to complete a certificate course. We also assist a small number of people who have come here from Nauru. Here for less than a year, they are still settling into community detention. They are not allowed to work and have very little money given to them. They have medical and dental appointments to keep. They hope for safety, dignity and freedom, but they have no idea what the future may hold. They desperately hope they may get a visa and be allowed to stay.

Our visiting program has been in place for around five years now. In March we stopped visiting because of COVID-19 restrictions. Most of our visitors are over 70 years old and have been advised to stay home. We try to stay in contact by phone, email and text with the people we know, and some support activity is continuing with no physical contact. As yet we do not know when visits might be possible again. But we still need your donations to be able to help. If you can, please donate as follows:

**Cheques should be made payable to “St. Joseph’s Catholic Church Refugee Support Group”, and sent to: St Joseph’s Parish Refugee Support Group, St Joseph’s Parish, 47 Stanhope Street, Malvern 3144.**

*If you require a receipt, please include your name and postal address.*

**Funds can also be transferred online. Bank details: St Joseph’s Parish Refugee Support Group / (CDF Account with NAB): BSB 083 347 Acc.No. 392 506 587**

*Please provide your surname in the reference section. If you require a receipt, please email your name and postal address to:*

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