



## Celebrating the Year of Welcome – June 2020

Refugee Week is Australia's peak annual activity to inform the public about refugees and celebrate positive contributions made by refugees to Australian society. The first Refugee Week events were organised in Sydney in 1986 by Austcare. In 1987, Refugee Council of Australia (RCOA) became a co-organiser of the week, which became a national event from 1988. RCOA took on responsibility for the national coordination of Refugee Week from 2004. Major-General Paul Cullen, the foundation president of both Austcare and RCOA, actively lobbied, from the 1980s, for a global annual celebration of the contribution of refugees. His dream was achieved in 2001, when the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) coordinated the first World Refugee Day (June 20).

Refugee Week provides a platform where positive images of refugees can be promoted in order to create a culture of welcome throughout the country. The ultimate aim of the celebration is to create better understanding between different communities and to encourage successful integration enabling refugees to live in safety and to continue making a valuable contribution to Australia.

Over the past 20 years, Refugee Week celebrations have developed in a number of other countries. While there are minor differences in the dates for Refugee Week, all include World Refugee Day (June 20). In Australia, Refugee Week is scheduled to ensure that it does not clash with public holidays in any Australian state or territory.

The aims of Refugee Week are:

- to **educate** the Australian public about who refugees are and why they have come to Australia;
- to help people **understand** the many challenges refugees face coming to Australia;
- to **celebrate** the contribution refugees make to our community;  
to focus on how the community can provide a safe and welcoming environment for refugees;
- for community groups and individuals to **do something positive** for refugees, asylum seekers and displaced people, within Australia but also around the world; and
- for service providers to **reflect** on whether they are providing the best possible services to refugees.

<https://www.refugeeweek.org.au/about/overview/>