

# salvos

magazine

REFUGEE WEEK 2024

## Hardship and heartbreak

Refugees and asylum  
seekers search for  
dignity and hope



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### FAITH TALK

Can't live  
without  
them

### MY STORY

Safe, and  
serving  
others

### FEATURE

Five minutes  
of social  
justice



**REFUGEE  
WEEK  
16-22 JUNE  
2024**

**FAMILY  
FINDING FREEDOM!**



**Refugee  
Week**

Coordinated by  
Refugee Council of Australia





## The Salvation Army is about giving hope where it's needed most.

### What is The Salvation Army?

The Salvation Army, an international movement, is an evangelical part of the universal Christian Church.

### Vision Statement

Wherever there is hardship or injustice, Salvos will live, love and fight alongside others to transform Australia one life at a time with the love of Jesus.

### Mission Statement

The Salvation Army is a Christian movement dedicated to sharing the love of Jesus by:

- Caring for people
- Creating faith pathways
- Building healthy communities
- Working for justice



The Salvation Army Australia acknowledges the Traditional Owners of the land on which we meet and work and pay our respect to Elders, past, present, and future. We value and include people of all cultures, languages, abilities, sexual orientations, gender identities, gender expressions, and intersex status. We are committed to providing programs that are fully inclusive. We are committed to the safety and well-being of people of all ages, particularly children.

# Salvos Magazine

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## Are we family?

Finding Freedom: Family is the theme for Refugee Week 2024 (16-22 June). The theme aims to help make the week a national celebration and facilitate discussions around what it means to be a refugee, to be free, and the power of family bonds (familial and chosen) as people are forced to flee their homelands and settle – hopefully – in a new country.

In this edition of *Salvos Magazine*, we focus on refugees and asylum seekers as individuals needing dignity, acceptance, support, understanding and hope.

Karen Elkington reflects on the uncertainty thousands of people who seek protection still experience in Australia, and additional challenges they face due to community stigma and complex migration processes.

Sandra Pawar shares her personal experience in failing to understand another culture, and how she has turned that around to help create places of belonging and a sense of family that wouldn't be complete without everyone involved.

Check out our 'Five minutes of social justice' column to find ways you can make a difference!

Simone Worthing **Editor**

# Hardship, heartbreak and mental health challenges

Refugees and asylum seekers search for dignity and hope

**As Refugee Week approaches (16-22 June), *Salvos Magazine* spoke to Major Karen Elkington, Manager of The Salvation Army's Asylum Seeker and Refugee Service in Melbourne, about the hardship, heartbreak and mental health challenges faced by refugees and people seeking asylum. Karen reflected on the uncertainty thousands of people who seek protection experience while waiting for their claims to be assessed, and additional challenges they face due to community stigma and complex migration processes.**

Many refugees and people seeking asylum are anxiously awaiting the outcome of the recently proposed Migration Amendment (Removal and Other Measures) Bill 2024 (the Bill). "The Bill, and its possible ramifications, are definitely 'in the headlines' in the asylum seeker and refugee space," says Karen.

"Our Policy and Advocacy team wrote a brilliant submission in opposition to this Bill, as did many other legal, community, and lived-experience advocates and organisations, due to the threats it poses to the wellbeing of refugees and people seeking asylum. As we wait to see whether the Bill is passed and becomes law, we are seeing the significant stress it is causing within our multicultural communities.

"Basically, if this Bill gets through in its current form, it permits the expansion of Government powers, including to

criminalise anyone who does not comply with deportation directions (regardless of whether this is intentional), condone the separation of children and families through deportation, and implement a blanket ban which prohibits all visa applications from specific countries. Whether these actions are executed or not, it is both concerning to suggest, and that it may also be made possible by legislation. This is causing incredible anxiety in our communities.

“

**It is exhausting.  
We go around and around for  
20 years. Why is life so hard?**

– An asylum seeker supported by the Salvos

”

"We are also noticing that the thousands of asylum seekers who have been in the country for over 10 years and have children born here, can now apply for Australian citizenship for the children once they turn 10. The children can get a green Medicare card and, in the future, can vote, but they're being raised in families who are still in immigration limbo."

Karen said many of these families can't actually access the benefits for their children due to the complexity navigating



the Services Australia processes. For families with children who have become citizens, Karen and her team are exploring this issue and are now working with Services Australia to get this resolved.

### MENTAL HEALTH CHALLENGES

The team is also finding deep depression and mental health challenges are present among refugees and people seeking asylum, particularly the 9000-12,000 who were not found to be owed protection during the unfair and now abolished Fast-Track visa system process. "They've basically been left behind with no real pathway to a visa, or ability to live a life with dignity in Australia," Karen explains.

"We are seeing them [refugees and people seeking asylum] lose hope. Experiences of depression, complex mental health challenges, homelessness and many other experiences of disadvantage are common. Men, women, children and families are suffering. ▶

### REZA'S STORY

Reza, who attends the Salvos Farsi congregation in Melbourne, left his country when his son was around nine. The boy, now a young man, got married in Iran recently and Reza was not able to be there for the celebration. Instead, he threw a party at the Farsi congregation to celebrate. It was nice that he could do that, and people gathered to support and congratulate him, but it's not the same as being there for your own son's wedding.

"If I return to Iran, I will go to prison but maybe first I can see my son," Reza shared. "He was nine when I left, now he is a man. I want to see my son. I will die in the prison, but at least I will see my son. Here? I have no hope."

"I can't do anything for them except pray for them, reassure them, support them and advocate for them. Advocacy is challenging, but we won't give up and, as Christians, we continue to reassure them of their value to us and to God. We speak gently and try to bring comfort and practical help, but we know they will have dark and depressive days because the situation is so difficult, overwhelming and frustrating. Their trauma is compounded, and disadvantage is perpetuated, with long and punitive processes to prove they are owed protection, rather than processes which focus on affording dignity and compassion. This culminates in feelings of intense uncertainty, fear, confusion and grief.

### ADDITIONAL SUPPORTS

The Asylum Seeker and Refugee Service is also a specialised Doorways (Salvos emergency relief) centre. People can be assessed for gift cards, food, clothing, toiletries and children's toys. Other necessities are also available for people to take home. A Doorways caseworker, chaplaincy team and an Employment Plus Local service is also available.



Major Karen Elkington was part of the Refugee Council of Australia's delegation to a Parliamentary Friends of Refugees event at Parliament House in Canberra, 2023.

### SONIA'S STORY

Sonia's husband has been in immigration detention for several years, leaving her and her toddler son alone in the community with limited support. Most days, Sonia completes the long and challenging process of applying for a visa, and travels to the detention centre to visit her husband. During one visit with Sonia, her husband and her son, the little boy pleaded with his dad to "come home with me and mum" and attempted to drag his father toward the door.

Although Sonia's husband was recently released and reunited with his family, the prolonged stress and trauma from family separation has taken its toll. Over time, staff supporting the family have noticed a change in Sonia's behaviour and, more recently, Sonia has appeared angry and distressed when attending The Salvation Army emergency relief services. Sonia has lost several pregnancies and struggles to afford daily living costs and her family's medical costs.

## GOOD NEWS

Although the outlook for many people seeking asylum seems bleak, there is some good news.

“The happiest news I’ve had is that some of our people who were former asylum seekers who’d arrived by boat have been able to transition onto Resolution of Status visas,” Karen shared. “After 12 months people can then apply for citizenship. It’s a joyous moment when they come in here with their applications for Australian citizenship so that I, as a minister of religion, can sign and verify their photos.”

“

**Australia treats animals better than people. They don’t like us. We can starve but Australia wouldn’t let animals go hungry.**

– An asylum seeker supported by the Salvos

”

“It’s really heartening and lovely to see that, after all this time, these people can finally apply for citizenship. But for most of the people we see, it would be a tremendous breakthrough if some sort of visa pathway could be found for them so they can continue their lives here with dignity in Australia.”

*\*Names have been changed*



Scan here for more stories on the Salvos’ work with refugees and asylum seekers.



## AMIN’S STORY

Amin has exhausted all avenues after being rejected by the Fast-Track visa processing. He struggles to afford daily life and is experiencing extreme financial hardship. Amin volunteers five days per week and has been found to be a reliable and skilled worker. He was offered employment but was unable to accept as he does not have work rights.

In the past, Amin lived with a kind Australian couple who had a spare room as he was unable to afford housing. He is no longer able to live there and faces homelessness. Amin cannot afford housing or food. He also cannot work to survive.

# Five minutes of social justice – Treatment of refugees and asylum seekers

Social justice means different things to different people, but it generally includes the idea of a society being fair and equitable.

In Australia, social justice challenges are multifaceted. Some of the issues we face are huge and will take effort to fix – but all of them can be made better.

As we approach Refugee Week (16-22 June), we look at the treatment of refugees and asylum seekers and ways we can respond.

In Australia, refugees and asylum seekers are forced to confront, not only the traumas associated with escaping violence, persecution or human rights violations in their home country, but also challenges on arrival due to harsh immigration policies, systemic discrimination and unequal opportunities in accessing employment, housing, healthcare and basic necessities.

Many also encounter difficulties and barriers in navigating complex migration processes and experience compounded disadvantages due to having limited work rights and being unable to earn an income to survive. Their risk of exploitation in the workforce or modern-slavery-like work conditions is increased where they may obtain work with payment that does not match market rates and where work environments are unsafe.

Refugees and asylum seekers, therefore, experience both exacerbated economic disadvantage and a cycle of

marginalisation, which limit their financial and general independence and hinder their ability to fully engage with society.

## GOT FIVE MINUTES?

- Watch the five-minute ABC *You Can't Ask That* - *Refugees* segment ([abc.net.au](http://abc.net.au)) and reflect on the questions that follow on the webpage.

## WANT TO DIG DEEPER?

- As a community, we can foster a culture of inclusion, and create welcoming spaces that actively include refugees and asylum seekers. If appropriate, we could even sponsor refugee families through refugee sponsorship programs.
- Stay informed about the challenges faced by refugees and asylum seekers and minimise stigma by sharing this knowledge.
- Volunteer in community kitchens or tutoring English.
- Check out [billiondollarbenefit.org.au](http://billiondollarbenefit.org.au), a campaign that advocates breaking down barriers so skilled refugees and migrants can work in their fields of expertise.
- Attend Refugee Week events.



Scan here for more details on Refugee Week.





An occasional column on all things books and reading

**For a powerful look at the personal journeys of a few refugees, check out the recommendations below:**

**FROM BHUTAN  
TO BLACKTOWN:  
LOSING EVERY-  
THING AND FIND-  
ING AUSTRALIA**

By Om Dhungel and  
James Button, 2023

Written with Walkley  
Award-winning  
journalist James

Button, *Bhutan to Blacktown* tells of Om Dhungel's remarkable journey from a village on the Himalayan ridges and life as a refugee in Kathmandu, to, eventually, Blacktown, Australia. It is a story of grit and determination, humour and irrepressible optimism.



**UNKNOWN:  
A REFUGEE'S STORY**

By Akuch Kuol  
Anyieth, 2022

A moving, confronting and ultimately uplifting story about a young girl's escape, with her family, from war-torn South Sudan to Kakuma Refugee Camp in Kenya, and then to Australia. But the reality of their new lives in Melbourne is complex; as Akuch's brother's behaviour spirals out of control, the family find themselves isolated and struggling with various forms of racism.



## Salvos launch New Beginnings project

The Salvation Army's New Beginnings project is a community sponsorship program for refugees that began in Canada and is now a global movement.

The project focuses on different families, community groups, faith communities and others welcoming and supporting a refugee family as they build a new life in your local area.

For more information on how the project works, including finding housing, fundraising, time and commitment, join the information session on Wednesday 19 June, from 12pm-1.30pm AEST.



Please register at this link:  
**[bit.ly/3yPGfoP](https://bit.ly/3yPGfoP)**

# Can't live without them

Creating beautiful spaces where everyone belongs

By Sandra Pawar

Ethnocentrism refers to considering one's own ethnic group superior in various crucial aspects, such as morality, history, spirituality, sociability, economy and development.

Recently, this mindset has caused divisions in the USA where I currently live, creating rifts between white and black communities, between white and Hispanic communities, between evangelical Christians and progressive Christians, and many other groups that find themselves in disagreement.

This growing separation has been so disheartening to see and is so destructive for the communities in which we all live. Nevertheless, I remain hopeful that there will eventually be change and healing in the US through time, and that there will be reconciliation and restoration between all these fractured groups and communities of people.

Reflecting on my past, I acknowledge my own ethnocentric behaviour when I first led a church in an African American community. I am hesitant to share my story, yet I hope it may prevent others from making my mistakes.

## UNINTENDED TRAUMA

As a new pastor appointed to a Salvation Army church in Pittsburgh, Atlanta, it was my first experience leading a church on my own. I found myself as the sole pastor of an inner-city church in a predominantly African American community. Among the congregation,

there were only three white individuals, including myself. My leadership approach was ethnocentric, mistakenly believing that my culture mirrored theirs. I failed to understand their culture fully, I neglected important social and political issues that this community was facing, and I did not prioritise their needs. None of this was done on purpose, but it was just as hurtful as if I had purposely made those decisions.

“

**I remain hopeful that there will be change and healing ...**

”

A vivid memory that stands out for me is when I organised a Black History Month event for my predominantly African American community without involving any of those community members in the planning process. That night, I received feedback from people expressing how deeply hurt they were by the images and songs I selected. What I thought were celebratory choices turned out to be triggers for trauma and pain. It was a lesson in recognising my own ethnocentrism and understanding the unintended pain it can inflict when not addressed.

## EQUALITY FOR ALL

My personal faith and my theology are in direct conflict with this whole idea of



ethnocentrism because my faith and the God I serve emphasise the equality and value of all individuals, regardless of race. My faith states that all are created in the image of God and that Jesus' sacrifice is for people of every background, culture and creed. So, in today's world, where ethnocentrism is common, I make conscious efforts to be the opposite by engaging in such things as learning about diverse cultures, avoiding assumptions, appreciating diversity, travelling the world, trying new and different cultural food and engaging in meaningful dialogues.

I firmly believe that every individual, because of their cultural heritage and not in spite of it, brings unique gifts that enhance and bring so much value to our lives. If we just acknowledged and appreciated the value that other people can bring due to their varied and different backgrounds, our communities, our churches and our neighbourhoods

would be such beautiful places to live life in with each other.

By cultivating authentic connections and showing care towards individuals from various backgrounds, we can help them feel a genuine sense of belonging, and we in turn will discover how much we actually love the people that surround us on our streets and in our schools and shopping centres, and we will get to a place where we could not imagine an Australia without them.

*Major Sandra Pawar is an Australian-born, US Southern Territory Salvation Army officer (pastor) at the International Corps (church) in Atlanta, Georgia, USA.*



Scan here for more  
Stories of Hope.

# From struggle to strength

By Tresor

We went in the refugee camp when I was like three months old. We lived in Bujumbura (Burundi) for 18 years as a refugee. It was a rough time. I'm originally from Congo ... the civil wars – pretty much that's what made me move from my country. My dad was an army soldier. He was like a pastor to his co-workers.

My dad was one of the commanders. He got shot twice in his stomach. Out of nowhere, a helicopter came in, rescued him to Burundi. He found himself in a hospital and from there he got full medication for everything. From there, he started life of a refugee. My mum was struggling back in Congo. She got told by my dad's co-worker, we don't know if your husband will live. She wasn't safe by herself. A single mum with four kids.

She fled to Burundi because of the war. That was the only choice that she had. My dad never got a job, nor my mum, under the refugee status, so they were full-time ministering. God would bring us people who want to be our relatives in Christ, paying everything needed for us to survive. In 2016, we went in a process of migration, and we did not have a choice to choose a country. When we heard we were going to Australia, we were happy, very happy. I thanked God for the opportunity of getting us to Australia. We got here in 2019. Studying English. Went to college, went to uni. We arranged to buy a house in Brisbane.

I've got a man who's a pastor in our congregation, the church of Salvation Army in Cairns. His name is Peter. Each



Tresor now works as a street chaplain in Cairns.

time he came to Brisbane, he would tell us about Cairns. And so my third time was like, I need to see the place myself. And from there I met Ben, pastor at The Salvation Army, Cairns.

I now work as a street chaplain, assistant team leader, for the Cairns Salvos. And our theme is to be Jesus' hands and feet in the street. I still have a thought in my mind that says, hey, God has a plan for you. I thank God for this community. I thank God to lead me to this place.

To watch Tresor's story, go to [youtu.be/ot3CvF9i2qI](https://youtu.be/ot3CvF9i2qI)

# The long journey to freedom

By Manhring

I was born in Myanmar, Matupi township. Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, she was Democracy for Burma leader. She was visitor to our township and our people welcomed her. Then I was also one of the cultural committee members, and we welcomed Daw Aung San Suu Kyi.

Then the military junta arrested all our committee members. They sent our community to the jail as prisoners for a long time – 10 years, 20 years. We fled to India. We walked for seven days, and I became a refugee under UNHCR (Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees) in India.

When we lived in New Delhi, many refugees had many problems – health problems, education problems and financial problems. Working for one day, I was getting a hundred rupees (AUD\$2). A hundred rupees was not enough for my family, and we needed rent and food. So, night time we went to vegetable shop, some people threw vegetables into the bin, then we take and we eat that one.

We can't worship together. We cannot go to the church. We don't have the church. I have difficulty, a lot of difficulty, but I have hope for God's plan for me.

In 2013, UNHCR granted humanitarian visas, and I arrived in Australia with my three children and my wife and my brother. I'm very happy and I enjoy praising the Lord. I will start my new life. That is the grace of God.

Now I am a farmer. I have been farming for three years. We have a lot of food, plenty for our family. My children, they go to public school, so very good here in Australia. Now we have freedom. Salvation Army help a lot spiritually. They help also Burmese people worship at the church.

I am now a leader of Burmese Fellowship Church. I would like to invest my life for discipleship program and sharing the gospel of God. That is my hope for the future.

To watch Manhring's video, go to [youtu.be/2XR-ynCN6Kc](https://youtu.be/2XR-ynCN6Kc)



Manhring is a farmer and is rebuilding his life in Australia.

## Curry rice moulds



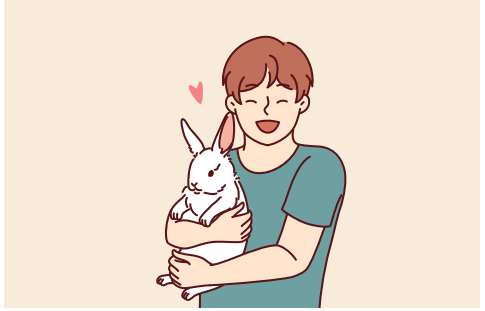
### Ingredients

¼ cup raisins, chopped; 1 green capsicum, chopped; ¼ cup parsley, chopped; ¼ cup walnuts, chopped; ¾ cup pineapple pieces, chopped; 1 red apple, cored, chopped; 1¼ cups rice, cooked; ½ cup oil; ½ cup vinegar; 1 tsp curry powder

### Method

- Combine raisins, capsicum, parsley, walnuts, fruit and rice. Stir in combined oil, vinegar and curry powder.
- Grease (spray) muffin tin and press mixture into individual moulds. Refrigerate for several hours.
- Scoop out and serve on small plates.
- Optional: use a loaf tin and serve cut into slices.

## HAVE A LAUGH



"I just want to take a break from life and go lay in a bunny bed and cuddle all the bunnies."  
- Leo, 7

"I know standing is just a human thing, but sometimes it makes me tired."  
- Tucker, 5

"I had an argument with my parents because they didn't get that I just needed to stay home in my pyjamas today."  
- Jenny, 5

## SIGNING IN



# Sudoku

Fill in the grid so that every row, every column and every 3x3 box contains the digits 1 to 9.

7		3	5	4			8	
		6		9			3	1
	2							
					4		8	
	8	7						
		4	8		9	3	7	2
5	7			2	8	9		
4	3							
2		8						7



# Quick quiz

### Name that song:

1. Is this the real life? Is this just fantasy?
2. Just a small town girl, living in a lonely world.
3. Hello darkness, my old friend.
4. At first, I was afraid, I was petrified.
5. There is a house in New Orleans.
6. All the leaves are brown, and the sky is grey.

# Tum-Tum



On which page of this week's *Salvos Magazine* is Tum-Tum hiding?

# Bible byte

"You must treat them the same as you treat your own citizens."

Leviticus chapter 19, verse 34  
*Easy-to-Read Version*

**Quiz answers:** 1. Bohemian Rhapsody – Queen 2. Don't Stop Believin' – Journey 3. The Sound of Silence – Simon & Garfunkel 4. I Will Survive – Gloria Gaynor 5. The House of the Rising Sun – The Animals 6. California Dreamin' – The Mamas & the Papas  
Tum-Tum: is hiding behind the bookend on page 9.

# DID YOU KNOW?

**Vegemite is good for you. It is a great source of vitamin B, folate, riboflavin, thiamine and niacin. Good for energy production and metabolism and the management of stress and anxiety.**

**It has been used to conduct electricity. An Australian chemist used Vegemite to complete a circuit and turn on a LED light.**

**It works as a disinfectant.**

**It can help with mouth ulcers.**

**It was the first electronically scanned item in Australia. In 1984, a 66-cent jar of Vegemite became the first product scanned at a checkout at Woolworths.**

7	9	3	5	4	1	2	8	6
8	4	6	7	9	2	5	3	1
8	4	6	7	9	2	5	3	1
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9	1	2	3	6	7	4	5	8
3	8	7	2	5	4	6	1	9
6	5	4	8	1	9	3	7	2
5	7	1	4	2	8	6	9	3
4	3	9	1	7	6	8	2	5
2	6	8	9	3	5	1	4	7



salvos  
STORES



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