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What we do at Refugee Legal

In our 30th year, our work continues to be underpinned by the same core conviction set since day one: that free legal assistance for people seeking asylum, refugees and vulnerable migrants is vital. Without it, rights and lives are endangered.

As Australia's largest provider of free legal assistance to vulnerable people seeking asylum or migration, we continue to be at the forefront of defending their rights and working for change.

Never has the need for our help been greater: unprecedented numbers of people are seeking protection in Australia under a system beset by the erosion of fundamental legal safeguards.

The demand for our services continues to create extraordinary challenges in responding to arbitrary deadlines, profoundly harmful policies and systemic injustices. True to tradition, our strategy has been to scale-up and hone frontline services to ensure that the most critical legal help can be given to thousands more in the most dire need.

At the heart of this work lie partnerships and collaboration with a vast network of over 550 volunteers, more than a dozen leading pro bono corporate law firms, Victoria Legal Aid, leading Law Schools, UNHCR and other international agencies, and our very generous philanthropic funders and individual donors.

30 years on, together, we are well-placed to respond to future challenges of escalating demand – at critical levels - for our essential legal services. Together, we will continue to make the biggest possible impact; knowing the powerful potential of our work to change the course of many people's lives immeasurably for the better.

We **advise** and **assist** people seeking asylum, refugees and disadvantaged migrants.

We **educate** within our community to raise awareness, develop understanding, inspire ideas and collaborations, and build action for change.

We **advocate** at local, national and international levels, in the media, in public and private forums, and with key partners for policies which are fair, just, humane and decent.

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Fast Facts for 2017–18

Total client assistance	13,858
Telephone advice	4,875
Fast track advice & assistance	3,142
People represented	3,069
Face-to-face advice	2,772

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Where our work makes its impact — transforming lives

AHMED and SIMA
Ahmed, Sima* and their two young children were granted protection visas in June 2018 after a six year battle.

Ahmed and Sima are Afghan Hazaras who fled to Australia by boat six years ago.

Like thousands of others, they came to us facing the final ruling on their fate. They needed our help.

Whilst still young they escaped from Taliban brutality. Ahmed was shot by extremists while working as a driver. Both witnessed atrocities against others seeking safety. Since being here, they've had two children, while living as a family in legal limbo for years on end.

We were able to provide Ahmed and Sima the essential legal assistance they needed to apply for protection under the complex and onerous 'Fast Track' process. Their claims were initially questioned but, through our legal work their cases were ultimately accepted and the cycle of injustice was broken. Ahmed, Sima and their two children can now stay here in safety and rebuild their lives without the fear of deportation to danger hanging over them.

And, like them, so many of the people we help express deep thanks for this help. But often, they also ask the question: 'What about all the others who need help, too?'

AMALI
Amali* – a 45 year-old Sri Lankan Tamil woman and single mother of three – was facing the final ruling on her fate.

In 2010, she fled with her three daughters after her husband was 'disappeared' by the Sri Lankan army. They witnessed the death of a relative and survived a horrific shelling attack. With courage, they decided to seek freedom from a life of constant dangers and abuse, including gender-based violence.

She was one of thousands of people – 15,000 nationwide – with a common predicament. After applying for protection by the 1 October 2017 deadline, they'd been called to a last chance interview with the Department of Home Affairs about their case.

With our legal assistance, they were able to present their claims. Their cases were ultimately accepted and they've been granted five-year protection visas (SHEVs). For the first time in their lives, Amali and her daughters are safe. They can leave their house without the fear of kidnap, brutality or death. Amali's eldest daughter, in her early 20s, is studying medicine at university, hoping to become a doctor. With our help, Amali and her daughters have been able to break the cycle of injustice, and are now able to rebuild their lives.

* Personal details have been changed to protect confidentiality

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Yes, I want to celebrate Refugee Legal's 30 years of helping refugees with my donation

Any donation to Refugee Legal goes directly to providing free legal assistance to people otherwise facing removal to serious harm or even death.

Payment details:

☐ **$30** ☐ **$300** ☐ **$3000** **Other $** _____

Your payment options:
Name: _____
☐ Visa / ☐ Mastercard
Credit Card No: _____/_____/_____/_____
Expiry date: ___/___
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Telephone: _____
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You can donate at any time at refugeelegal/org/au/donate or call (03) 9413 0124.

Martin Luther King famously said: "The arc of the moral universe is long, but it bends towards justice."

It may not feel like this right now. But it's easy to forget that slavery was abolished, apartheid was defeated, women here and in other countries got the right to vote. History shows that progress and change are not supernatural forces – they are determined by individual will and political will. Our agency.

Our work together can – and does – effect real change by bending the destiny of so many people and of our country toward greater justice.

That's why you and your support for Refugee Legal and those we assist are so vital, so valuable, and so powerful.

With sincere thanks,
David Manne
Executive Director
Refugee Legal

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Patrons of Refugee Legal

Her Excellency the Honourable Linda Dessau AM, Governor of Victoria (Patron in Chief)

Emeritus Professor Gillian Triggs

Professor Hilary Charlesworth

The Honourable Michael Kirby AC CMG

Legal assistance saves lives and provides durable solutions

"We know that, above all, people forced to flee from danger in their home country need a safe haven. That is their right. They need to rebuild their lives in safety. To do that, they first and foremost need the legal permission to stay.

When it comes to helping refugees and people seeking asylum, the first priority should be on providing accurate legal advice.

While legal advice and assistance are being provided, ... efforts can also be made to provide the material support to make the inevitable waiting time tolerable. But it is the legal assistance that will save lives and provide durable solutions.

If you are thinking about helping refugees and people seeking asylum, I encourage you to support Refugee Legal to maintain its free advice service to help refugees secure the legal permission they need to stay in Australia."

— Emeritus Professor Gillian Triggs

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Thank you to our generous supporters

As a non-profit organisation, Refugee Legal relies on the generous support of the community. We are grateful to all our supporters and acknowledge here the leadership, gifts and support of our major partners who make our work possible.

Refugee Legal supporters

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Refugees

Asylum seekers

Migrants

www.refugeelegal.org.au

BACK COVER

Refugee Legal: 30 years Defending the rights of refugees asylum seekers and migrants

Year in Review: 2018

FRONT COVER