

“We know funding legal services isn’t sexy, but this is the best way to help refugees.”

Refugee lawyers shaking collection tins to keep their service open



Lawyers from the Immigration Advice and Rights Centre (IARC) are out on the street for Refugee Week, teaming up with local cafes to demonstrate support for refugees and to help raise funds to keep IARC’s doors open.

“We wanted to do something for Refugee Week that showed our clients that the Australian community are behind them” says Katrina Ironside, Director of IARC. “Just walking into a café and seeing a sign that says “we support refugees” makes a difference to people.”

“And we need to raise funds. Our lawyers do an amazing job with little in the way of resources” says Ms Ironside “but like all Community Legal Centres, we are facing funding cuts of 30%.”

The IARC team is 5 lawyers-there is no admin and no other supporting roles that we are used to seeing in organisations. Asked how IARC provided legal assistance to 3,600 people in the last year as well as delivering training to over 2,000 clients and support workers on migration law, the largest and most complex legislation in Australia behind the Tax Act, Ms Ironside says.

“IARC has been helping people for 30 years. Funding cuts don’t make our jobs easier, we are constantly being asked to do more with less. The law is more complex and our clients are vulnerable. People are trying to have a normal life but are functionally homeless. They have no access to social security and, if they do have work rights, are struggling to find work because of the impacts of trauma, PTSD, loss of family, resettlement in a new country, learning a new language and an uncertain future.”

“IARC is able to do the work we do with the help of an amazing and ever-increasing team of volunteers and supporters. We know that people don’t think about donating to community legal services but the reality is people need specialist legal help. It’s the help that IARC provides that will ultimately make the difference to whether refugees and vulnerable migrants will be able to call Australia their home.”

And this week, more than 60 local cafes and their customers are more than happy to pitch in to support IARC –Ms Ironside says “it just shows how much the community cares about refugees and recognises the value of our multicultural society.”

IARC is a not for profit Community Legal Centre. IARC provides legal advocacy for people in the Australian community, in detention centres and on Nauru and Manus.