



**SANCTUARY**

**West Coast Refugee Sanctuary Group**

*Patrons - Angela and Fred Chaney*

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## CHAIRMAN'S REPORT 2008

Firstly I would like to thank everyone on the committee, our patrons Angela and Fred Chaney, all of our members and supporters for their contributions and support over the past twelve months.

WCRSG Inc. has been involved in some great initiatives in the past year which are highlighted below;

WCRSG Inc. affiliated with the Refugee Council of Australia and was involved in a local forum on issues facing refugees settling in WA. The annual report of the RC of A highlighted housing and employment as the main issues facing families when coming to WA. The affiliation has allowed us to keep abreast of current trends and issues relating to refugee issues in Australia.

Our Refugee Week event this year was very successful. A soup and bun fundraiser was held after two masses at Greenwood in June and raised \$350 from our supporters. Thanks to all of our sponsors and supporters together with the committee members who donated their time and resources to make it a success.

After much lobbying from refugee support groups in Australia, including WCRSG Inc., the Federal Government has finally relaxed some of the onerous refugee detention practices and now children are no longer held in detention centres for long periods. The negative publicity and demonstrated harmful impact on children finally convinced authorities to find a better solution for processing refugees and asylum seekers with young children.

Loan repayments continue to be an issue for some families and accordingly a push to increase repayments is under way with some recalcitrant families. We have now supported 38 families to reunite under UNHCR Humanitarian Visas since our inception in Feb. 2005, an achievement to be applauded.

Finally I would like to especially thank Br. Geoff for his support and also Fr. Vin Conroy who has left for overseas for at least a year. He was the catalyst for WCRSG Inc. and I hope the parish continues with its great support in his absence.

J. Benson  
Chair WCRSG Inc.