

STRENGTH AND KINDNESS

Brigidine Asylum Seekers Project (BASP)



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*I was a stranger and you made
me welcome ...*

Newsletter 115 April 2024

The Project aims to:

- * provide hospitality and practical support for people seeking asylum
- * actively network with like-minded individuals and groups who are working for justice for asylum seekers
- * promote advocacy for the rights of asylum seekers
- * raise awareness of asylum seeker issues and concerns through a range of activities

Immigration policies in any country are very important—and very often conflicted. They bear a lot of importance for a country because, perhaps more than any other area of public life, they tell us what a country values and in what direction a country is moving. A sub section of these policies are those relating to refugees. These are most informative in terms of those same questions. For Australia: are we part of a global community that is willing to do our level best to achieve world peace? Do we want to rescue those displaced and brutally treated by nations engaged in war? Wars will continue to drive people from their homes, famines and the implications of climate change are with us for the foreseeable future and the big questions remain whether we put our heads under the blankets and hope it will all go away or play our part in a positive way.

It is tempting to want to build a metaphorical moat around our shores and defend ourselves against any would-be moat crashers. The dominant language framework around ‘securing our borders’ comes from this understanding. The obvious response to this stark possibility is that virtually none of us (except out indigenous people) would be here if this had been this island continent’s approach over the centuries..

The answers to these questions are often born out of racism. We (those of anglo-celtic and like backgrounds) have so often acted out of assumptions that we are better than everyone else. Our colonial ancestors treated both the indigenous inhabitants of this country, and the convicts they wanted to punish and use to establish power and domination, in the cruelest of ways.



This led to the White Australia policy which rested on the assumption of the superiority of white people who spoke English and many would argue we haven't moved much from that understanding. Racism can certainly disguise itself in many ways. How many times do we hear “I'm not a racist but ...”

There are many elements of discrimination and punishing people in current policies governing how asylum seekers are treated. We are living with the consequences of the Fast Track policies, and those subjected to the consequences of these continue to be punished for their resilience and courage. We punish people because of their birthplace. We literally tell them—Go back to the place that persecuted you. We will give you years of fighting for your rights in legal battles and do nothing to help as you try to find a way through dealing with faceless bureaucrats and an impenetrable Immigration department.

The answer may be with some of the beautiful people such as those pictured here who come to Australia asking for protection and who were part of the Palm Sunday rallies.



Donations to the Brigidine Asylum Seekers Project are tax deductible

What is happening politically in the asylum seekers arena?

Thanks to all those who responded to our request to contact Senators about the proposed new bill. This will probably be decided by a vote in the Senate early in May.

To remind us all - Labor is proposing legislation that (if passed) would see people with unsuccessful refugee protection claims being sent back to places of danger or be jailed for up to 5 years if they fail to take action to leave Australia. The Bill would also make it possible for the Minister to take away refugee status where it has already been given. Up to 5,000 non-citizens could receive orders to cooperate with removal from Australia under Labor's controversial deportation bill, a figure far higher than earlier estimates. Of these 375 are children born in Australia.

This is a new low in Australia's punitive treatment of people seeking our protection.

In some ways it seems the nightmare of how asylum seekers are treated is a merry-go-round.

- Offshore processing has begun again in Nauru
- Media continues making sensational claims and innuendos
- Government members (including the Minister for Home Affairs) using language that is disparaging towards people seeking asylum
- The Government is trying to get in first and undo Court decisions that would ensure more humane outcomes for asylum seekers and refugees
- 12 years of shunting people around various detention centres

Detention and the mess we are in (not to mention the immorality of it all)

Australia has an "intractable" caseload of people held in immigration detention for long periods. At the end of last year there were 871 people locked up in detention centres. Of these 115 are still there because they arrived by boat. 571 have had their visas cancelled. Another 225 are detained for different reasons. The figures include those who came to Australia as part of the Humanitarian Program.

So the population of detention centres has shifted from mainly asylum seekers who arrived by boat to people whose visas have been cancelled on character grounds. Asylum seekers have had visas cancelled in two main ways. Some have committed a crime and been sent to prison and at the end of their sentence have not been allowed back into the community. These have been re-detained in immigration detention centres. Another group have been re-detained because their visas expired.

As a result of the High Court NZYQ decision, about 150 people were released. Life for them has, on the whole, not been easy. Many were detained for years and some who had been in prison say that experience was much better than immigration detention. We are not at the end of the fall-out from the NZYQ decision: NZYQ meant that if the government was going to keep people in immigration detention "the sole reason must be deportation" or their application for a protection visa was still being considered. But the government is still keeping some people who have been found by the administrative appeals tribunal to be owed protection in detention.

Why not regularise the system—offer amnesty to those who have had no resolution to their application for protection and manage a humane and kind approach instead of the punitive and demoralising one we have become used to.

Current issues to watch

- Recently, when a newly arrived couple applied for protection they were given a Bridging Visa and no work rights.
- A man released as a result of the High Court decision was taken to court and convicted for a driving offence committed before his visa cancellation five years ago. He has lost his drivers license for 2 years.

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Discussion afternoon
2pm – 3.30pm Wednesday 22nd May
At 54 Beaconsfield Pde Albert Park
(Brigidine Ministries Centre)

We have approached a couple of different potential speakers for this day and are waiting for an answer. At any rate we would like to meet to celebrate Volunteers week and those who show

- the ‘wins’ that make the effort all worth while
- the passion for change that all at BASP have
- the courage and kindness of so many

We will share some stories and some food and tell you all how much we appreciate each one of you. Please come!

BASP Online Trivia Night

St. Mary’s Hampton online trivia event in support of the **Brigidine Asylum Seekers Project** is back on Friday 3 May.



We aim to provide a fun night for you and your friends and raise money for a good cause, and we’d love your support. To take part, sign up as a team host, and get your team together for a light-hearted night of trivia and conviviality. Suggested minimum donation of \$30 per team member.

When

Friday 3 May 7.30pm to 9.40pm

Where

Your place! Invite a group of friends to your home, up to 10 people - small groups are welcome. If you prefer you can form a distributed team in several locations and use our online breakout rooms to talk over your answers.

How

You don't need to be a tech wizard. You need a smartphone, tablet (iPad, Android) or a computer with sound (a webcam would be nice but not essential). You’ll get a link for the Zoom online chat service and use your web browser to answer the trivia questions.

Booking and more information: cohdig.au/trivia



Housing Needs

As is so often in the news, the housing, especially rental, market is in crisis. This makes it doubly hard for people seeking asylum trying to get a place to live.

One family had to vacate their property by a set date and wanted to remain in the same area. Karin, a volunteer with vast property management experience, inspected over 10 houses, BASP applied for 8 of them and was unsuccessful every time.

Fortunately, a supporter made contact, offering a house in another area, available – at a push- by the same date. How lucky we were.

One of the asylum seeker men and Libby were pulling weeds and assembling beds in the morning, ready for the family to arrive mid afternoon. Many thanks to the owner and all who made this possible.

Another family has sought BASP's help with rent, food and bedding, while the husband seeks work. The family of 4 are in one room in a shared house they had found. They were pleased to get this basic assistance from BASP and delighted when they were offered a weekend away with members of the Mariana Community in their house at Mill Grove. These breaks in the country are such a treat for those fortunate to get the opportunity. Thanks to Cheryl and Mary- again.

Sometimes there seems to be a serendipitous moment. The family we described above were desperate because the mother is on a placement which does not allow her to work. She needs to finish this to give them any chance to get on their feet in the future. The husband walked the streets from one place to another asking for a job—all to no avail. At last he got some limited hours car washing—at \$16 an hour. He got another couple of hours dishwashing in a restaurant, a couple more cutting, lawns, another couple moving some furniture. Then BASP had an offer of a car from a very generous donor. Asking this man if this would help he said he could do Uber Eats and make an average of \$16 an hour. He believes he can work 10 hours a day doing this.

Another young woman appeared at the office one Friday afternoon, having recently arrived in Australia, fearing for her safety in Ethiopia and having spent the previous night sleeping at the station. A community worker had sent her to BASP and we were relieved that we had a room available for her.

We do not always have a place immediately available, but we do work on moving people already housed by us into private rental IF possible so that we can respond to emergencies and new people in need.

Who we house now?

We still pay the rent for about 160 people—but these are not all the same people. As much as possible we get people to do even casual work so that they can contribute to their own rent. For some this is impossible.

In the housing we own or are allowed to use (no rent or low rent) we have

- some of those who arrived more than a decade ago who by now have no visa or Medicare, and are usually suffering ill health
- Some of those who were detained off-shore, some waiting for a Canada or New Zealand option for resettlement. The Government has said they will never settle in Australia so the future is bleak.
- Some who were in the Park hotel and released with virtually no support. Some of these have moved on and are independent, a number still need housing support. They too have no hope they will be allowed to settle in Australia.
- Newly arrived people—who fly in and are usually totally bewildered by what to do next. Often they find one of the few organisations who can help them—often via by a sheer chance meeting with someone or on the internet. Lately we have had a number arriving from Ethiopia, Columbia, Uganda.



Kildare Ministries First National Conference for all Staff

Celebrating 10 Years

REGISTRATION AND GATHERING: 25th March

CONFERENCE: 26th March and 27th March 2024

Brisbane • Sydney • Geelong • Adelaide • Melbourne

Kildare Ministries Conference

Crossing New Seas

Kildare Ministries is comprised of 10 schools and 3 Community works. BASP is one of the Community works (with Wellsprings for Women in Dandenong and Saltbush in Balnarring). More than 1300 staff attended a national conference on (25 to 27 March) connected across 5 hubs in Melbourne, Geelong, Brisbane, Sydney, and Adelaide. It was a technical feat to bring together so many people who were physically in the five hubs and allow interaction between everybody.

Kildare Ministries has been in existence for ten years and this was a time to stop and reflect and recommit to the common vision of Living Justice, Living Peace. The conference theme centred on: Crossing New Seas, Encounter, Dream and Do.

Professor Anne Pattel-Gray (a globally recognised expert on Black theology, and the first Indigenous Australian to be awarded a doctorate in theology in the 1990s) was the keynote speaker. She was both inspiring and challenging. Reconciliation is about taking steps towards transformative action. She spoke about the question of reconciliation as a pilgrimage towards justice .



We heard from prominent speakers such as Professor Gillian Triggs, Dr Elissa Roper, Francis Sullivan, and Professor John Warhurst. BASP had a representative in four of the five hubs and each gave a presentation on the human face of asylum seekers in Australia. It was a great opportunity for BASP. Networking within Kildare Ministries and much more broadly in the community gives us the opportunity to influence many by providing information and stories. Those present at the Conference showed great interest in the Community Works and we will work hard to increase our interaction across the entities.

Food and household necessities

We are absolutely blessed by the donations of pantry items, including food vouchers. Sometimes these come to us by individual people who just pass in items. Often they come from groups—many of these are parishes—Catholic, Anglican, Uniting Church. Sometimes schools have a drive for BASP. We have never tried to count in any way what support this amounts to but overall it would be many thousands of dollars each year. This help gets distributed both to people who come to the centre for help and by volunteer drivers who take it out to homes (along with fresh food picked up at Second Bite).

One man who obviously could not cook at all was initially kept alive by packets of rice that only had to be microwaved. He had no English but when he came in he knew exactly where to go to get these packets. He has now learned to cook rice!!

Barb and John keep all of this organized in the pantry and store room and pack the bags to go out to people. Thanks to them and to all those quiet drop-offs from all over the place that keep this valuable service going!

Jane Keogh advocates for men in PNG

Since parliament resumed in February, Sister Jane, a Brigidine sister aged 78 has been engaged in a silent solo desperate night vigil by the roadway leading to parliament house.

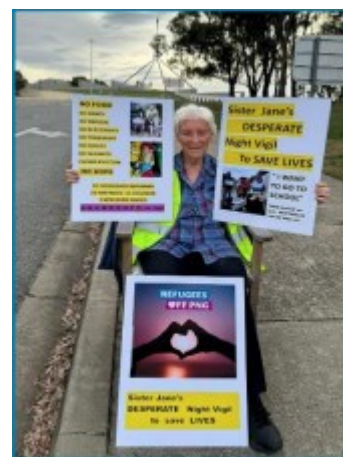
Jane explains her vigil as something she had to do for herself to protest the desperate situation of the 54 refugees still abandoned in PNG for over 19 years now. She sits at night, sometimes from midnight, sometimes from 4am to 9.30am every morning before parliament sits. Fourteen vigils so far since 6th February and 8 more to go before parliament recesses for April.

Jane's actions symbolise the darkness, the desperation of the PNG refugees, unseen, ignored in their suffering. Politicians see Jane and her signs as they drive in to work. Four politicians have visited, a radio interview now is on the ABC and local refugee group websites. Daily 2 minute videos from the darkness, or photos and updates are posted on Facebook with one post shared receiving a thousand viewings.

Since 22 November the 54 men together with 20 partners and 33 children have been denied allowances, food, transport, electricity and security. They live under constant threat of eviction and even medical support is sometimes denied. Neither government of PNG or Australia will accept responsibility for their lives. The men are desperate, and all are in trauma with varying degrees of mental and physical ill health. A few are now paranoid and four have lost ability to make decisions or look after their daily needs. There is no authority to turn to.

Apart from this vigil Jane set up a PNG CRISIS Working Group networking with individuals and refugee support groups to provide approximately \$1000 a day to keep alive the approximately 100 people endangered by this situation. Medical costs have been paid for pregnant women and two newborn babies. In nearly 4 months \$97,000 has passed through Jane's Brigidine Ministry account and been paid out in cash or food

vouchers to each family. There is little or no local support available and fortunately there is one refugee well and capable enough to manage the PNG end of this project. Some of the men will eventually be resettled in New Zealand or Canada but the process is so slow. Some applied over three years ago. Jane is a liaison between MOSAIC, the sponsorship agency in Canada, the Refugee Council in Australia and volunteers in Canberra who have processed 130 applications with 61 already in Canada and the rest still waiting in PNG or Australia.



Jane is supported in her work by the Brigidine Community and Manus Lives Matter set up by Jane in Canberra in 2015 to support the refugees abandoned in PNG.

Action on behalf of all offshore asylum seekers All refugees and people seeking asylum who were detained on Nauru or Manus Island need a meaningful pathway to permanency. There are still 54 refugees and people seeking asylum who remain in Papua New Guinea, and more than 1,000 who have been brought to Australia from Nauru and PNG for medical assistance but have not been resettled. They have suffered a dreadful ordeal. Some have been living in Australia for seven or more years where they have been working or running businesses and their children going to school. They too live on temporary bridging visas. The Australian Government should resettle them as a matter of urgency, including:

- Bringing to Australia the remaining people in PNG who wish to come.
- Allowing those in Australia who wish to remain here to apply for a permanent visa.

Write to your local federal MP calling for a pathway to permanency for these folk.



Discussion Session 13/4/24 was with Zoe Daniel, Independent MP for Goldstein. This had full-house attendance and was well received by those who came.

Zoe spoke of her experience and exposure to conflict and dispossessed people when working as a foreign correspondent prior to entering politics as member for Goldstein. She spoke



specifically about Myanmar and the difficulties for people seeking to flee conflict there, being unable to secure exit visas from transit countries. What can a government like Australia do? Considering sanctions against corrupt / failed states is one solution taken up by other democracies.

Regarding Australia’s position re people seeking asylum, she acknowledged the toxicity around the issues in the past and considered the current government having a better attitude but also being mindful of the opposition weaponizing the issue eg the release of the men after the High Court Decision. (This was before the Deportation Bill was revealed)

She was hopeful that the ‘social license’ about asylum seekers and our treatment of them is changing and we all have a role to play in changing attitudes – letting government know, “This is not us”. “We are ashamed of such sentiments”.

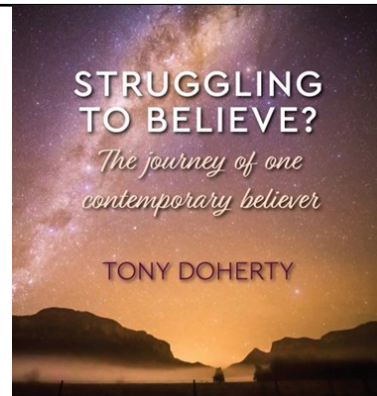
We need to take part in community conversations and to **jump in quickly** on issues. Act at the time of the issue/ concern as issues and media move quickly and the momentum may be lost.

One of the people BASP has supported had her rent ready to pay. An unfortunate accident happened to her. A man who was an undocumented person ran into her car. He begged her not to report the accident. She agreed and then had to use her rent money to pay the repairs to her car.

Asylum seekers from the following nationalities were granted permanent visas in the 2022-2023 year.

- Myanmar (427 visas with a grant rate of 91.4%)
- China (255 with a grant rate of 8.4%)
- Pakistan (17 with a grant rate of 60.2%)
- PNG (94 with a grant rate of 63.1%)
- Iran (89 with a grant rate of 92.7%)
- Afghanistan (83 with a grant rate of 94.3%)
- Iraq (80 with a grant rate of 82.5%)
- Ethiopia (with a grant rate of 83.9%)
- Venezuela (51 with a grant rate of 98.1%)
- Malaysia (46 with a grant rate of 1.9%)

These figures are from Abul Rizvi published in Pearls and Irritations in March 2024



Struggling to Believe is a book written by Tony Doherty, a friend and supporter of BASP. Tony donated the royalties to BASP and to

our delight a cheque for \$10,000 came to us.

The book is written in surprisingly accessible language and beautifully illustrated. It is available at Garratt Publishing in Mulgrave

www.garrattpublishing.com.au

sales@garrattpublishing.com.au

Telephone: (03) 85452911

Volunteers



With Volunteers being recognised across the community in May through **Volunteers Week May 20-27**, BASP takes this opportunity to salute all those who support us. This includes so many people whose collective efforts enable us to do what we do.

The BASP Board is a voluntary Board which has been operating for 5 years now, providing governance oversight and support to the work being undertaken. We are so fortunate to have these skilled and experienced people, giving their time to the organisation. The current members are :

Julie Francis (Chair), Mark Northeast, Norman Katende, Margaret Fyfe, Josh Lourensz, Rita Grima

Our supporters are a wide group- some who donate personally on a regular or occasional basis giving us the funds to continue our work. Others undertake activities to raise funds for us such as directing birthday guests to donate to BASP rather than a gift to themselves; running the Trivia Night; holding raffles., having events—musical and others. Others support us through collecting grocery items for the pantry and / or vouchers, these being increasingly essential through the cost-of-living pressures we are all currently experiencing.

We then have those supporters who give their time and interact directly with people seeking asylum. Some have visited families for years and they have become integral parts of each other's social groups. Others will assist with driving- to appointment, to deliver food and household items. Others are asked to undertake a particular task, which sometimes grows! One example is a volunteer who was asked to help an adult daughter and her mother waiting for a visa determination and income support. What an advocate she has been, chasing government officials and MPs to get the outcome they needed. Once they received their permanent residency, the mother and daughter decided to visit a 3rd country to see family members they had not seen for 5 years. This proved a fraught exercise as the Middle East conflict intensified and again the volunteer had to advocate to get them back here safely.

Another couple, who had years of running a B&B before volunteering with us, seemed the right ones to ask about a fence which had been blown down in a storm. The owner of the property makes the house available at low rent and asked if we could oversee the fence replacement. This couple were amazing, contacting the neighbouring property owners, getting quotes for fence replacement, overseeing the work done and payments made

Another volunteer who has been visiting a family for support and friendship, speaks Spanish. When the interpreting service was unable to find an interpreter for a Colombian couple who arrived at the office recently, we called the volunteer. She was at work but said it was quiet and was able to assist the couple explain their request. Another Spanish speaking family arrived with no English and BASP was able to respond immediately to their critical needs because another volunteer spoke Spanish.

The other aspect of the support from volunteers is the 'heart' they give to the BASP team and the broader Kildare Ministries community. Each year, KM, the umbrella organisation of which we are a part, focuses on one of its values. This year it is Hope. While the inadequacy of the government's response and the difficulties faced by so many people seeking asylum can dampen hope at times, the goodwill and generosity of our supporters give us all great hope - about the goodness of people in the community and about being able to continue to assist as many as we can with what we have.

Volunteers can also give us a laugh – one who is trying to get information needed for a visa wrote “Getting information or documents from the UAE is apparently as difficult as getting any response from our own department. (Immigration matters, or, at least, refugee matters, seem to move with the speed of very thick molasses)”

To all who support us in these many ways, we say **THANK YOU**. Please know what a difference your contributions make to the very vulnerable group of people we assist.



It is always a moment of joy when we see the next generation born in Australia. One amazing family now have 4 adult sons and one young child born overseas and a baby pictured here born in Australia. They are all studying, working, successful and happy.

All because this one man, Sulaiman, spent years and years working at all sorts of hard jobs and long hours while applying for protection and then for his family to join him, Such are the stories of heroism. Thanks to Judy Dixon for her unwavering work as a migration agent on behalf of this family.

Jobs

Caroline is a volunteer who comes in every Tuesday to help with applying for jobs and generally advising our asylum seekers about work. Every job opportunity that comes up is a time of great rejoicing. Recently one of our women got a job with Save the Children in an Accounts Officer role.

Two men from Uganda who were teachers in their own country are being helped by staff at Killester College to apply for registration to teach in Australia. The hurdles they have to get over are immense! If you hear of any jobs available please let us know.

FYI: Nasser (an artist many of us know) is training to be a mechanic.

Eileen Creagh money from Irish Government to BASP

Eileen Crough is a Brigidine Sister and one of our loyal BASP supporters. She turned 100 recently. She is still an Irish citizen—although lived and worked in Australia all her adult life. The Irish Government sent her a cheque to celebrate her 100 years and she immediately sent the money to BASP.

Victoria's Container Deposit Scheme (CDS)

This is a Victorian Government scheme designed to protect our environment and recycle materials into other useful items. We can return drink cans, bottles and cartons for a 10-cent refund at refund points across Victoria.

For the management of the scheme, Victoria is divided into 3 zones and managed by 3 different operators.

To learn more about CDS Vic and find your nearest refund point closest to you visit <http://www.cdsvic.org.au>

Each Zone Operator has a phone app. Use the app to organize your recycling, to donate the refunds, and generally track what is happening.



An opportunity to make some money for BASP and helping to a more sustainable future.

Refund types.

Your refund can be donated to BASP. **BASP has been registered in all 3 zones.**

At the donation point you may be asked for the *Donation Partner ID* which is **C2000010362**.

Or you can search for *Brigidine Asylum Seekers Project*.

A few people have begun to do this and although the money coming in is small we can see the potential!

Nauru again being used for offshore detention

There were 1233 people detained on Nauru in August 2014. The last of the children left in February 2019. The Medevac legislation, which required the Minister to consider the views of independent doctors in determining whether a person should be transferred for medical treatment in Australia, saw 192 transferred to Australia. Gradually more were sent to Australia. The law was repealed in December 2019. By the time the Labor Government came into power, in May 2022, there were 112 people left on Nauru. By June 2023 there were fewer than 5 people there. However, since September 2023 this population has increased again.

Since September last year, fifty four people seeking asylum who arrived by boats have been sent to Nauru. The largest group landed at Beagle Bay and initially they were looked after by the local indigenous people. These locals were proud of the fact that they were able to respond with kindness to the unexpected arrivals.

The Kimberley landscape can be brutally hot and hard to survive and the impulse to assist outsiders is ingrained, no matter what their nationality or visa status.

"I'm pretty stoked with our mob at Beagle Bay in terms of looking after people as human beings," reflects one of the leaders. The country of origins of the people seeking asylum are reported to be Bangladesh, Pakistan and Indian. Following the arrival of the people seeking asylum, the Prime Minister made the public statement: *"our position on Operation Sovereign Borders is very clear, and people who attempt to arrive here by boat will not settle here"*. Advocates and advocacy organisations have expressed concern for the welfare of the people seeking asylum in Nauru, considering its long history of mistreatment and human rights concerns in detention, including the need for ongoing transparency within offshore detention.



For several hours the men believed to be from Pakistan, India and Bangladesh waited in a public park for the authorities to arrive. (ABC News Erin Parke)

We are very concerned about opening up Nauru again. A policy that was only ever intended to be temporary lasted more than a decade, at immense human and financial cost. While Australia retains an "enduring" offshore detention centre on the island, on standby to be re-established at any time, there is always the fear that it will be. This has proven to be true.

Young refugees failed by the flawed Fast Track system urged political leaders in Canberra recently to finally let them call Australia home after living here for over ten years in visa limbo.

Delegation to Canberra On Tuesday 26 March a delegation of eight Tamil, Iranian and Rohingya refugees, aged 17 to 27, addressed MPs from Labor, Greens and Independents at a series of briefings in Parliament House. Powerful stories were shared, MPs were told real life experiences, the barriers to education, employment, starting a small business and building a life. Cruel laws leading to cruel outcomes. Australia should be celebrating these young people and their families, not punishing them.



BASP knows three of these young people. They all deserve a chance to carve a future for themselves—the same as all other young people of their age. Since the Fast Track process to assess protection claims was introduced by the Abbott Government in 2014, the Australian Labor Party has publicly acknowledged it as deeply flawed and unfair. However, new legislation proposed by the Albanese Government, which will abolish Fast Track and see a new review tribunal established, still fails to provide a pathway to permanency for the thousands who have already suffered hardship and injustice from a system plagued with delays and inconsistencies.

Palm Sunday 2024

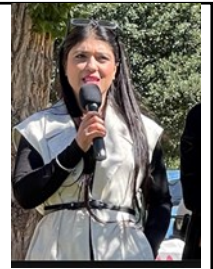


Palm Sunday in Melbourne was an overcast day on the 24th March. We met in the Parliament Gardens. We began with a very moving inter faith ritual where representatives of many faiths shared a symbol and a verse from their faith traditions. Then followed some talks and a walk. A number of schools participated and students from Xavier College handed out pictures of doves symbolizing our need for peace. We are grateful to all those who made this event significant.



And in Ballarat ...

Ballarat mum and dad Raj and Susan and their two Australian-born sons, Success and Suyog (10 and 7) were granted permanent visas last July and are eagerly looking forward to reuniting with the couple's older two children, now 17 and 12, who they were forced to leave with grandparents when they fled 11 years ago. Susan reminded Brigid of when they used to meet in the Melbourne Immigration Detention centre (MITA) and after their release. They have applied for family reunion visas for their 2 older children now 12 and 17 but are still waiting!!!!!!



It was a very small and very moving event in front of the Ballarat Town Hall on March 8th, **International Women's Day.**

From the organisers: Ballarat Afghan Action Group (BAAG) hosted a quiet candle lit vigil and reflection to acknowledge and express solidarity with the women and girls of Afghanistan. Guest speakers were: Sr. Colleen Jackson RSC. Colleen is a Sister of Charity, psychologist and educator. She is Chair of Ballarat Afghan Action Group who will reflect on her experience in working to eliminate human trafficking and to support survivors of human trafficking, slavery and forced marriage. Sr Veronica Lawson RSM. Veronica is a Sister of Mercy, a past student, teacher and Principal of Sacred Heart College, St Martins in the Pines, and Co-Governor of Damascus College. Veronica and her fellow Sisters have been in the forefront of advocacy, campaigning, practical aid and support for refugees since East Timorese refugees reached Ballarat in the 1990s.. Sr Brigid Arthur CSB. Brigid is an Australian Brigidine sister, educator, refugee advocate, activist and co-founder of the Brigidine Asylum Seekers Project [BASP]. The BASP motto is "I was a stranger and you made me welcome". Brigid will reflect on the lives and experiences of people she knows who struggle to survive in Australia but cannot go back.



We are grateful for any of the following food (or vouchers to buy food and household necessities).



We currently have enough tinned food except for cans of fruit, peas, carrots, corn and tomatoes.

The following are still very much appreciated:

1 kg Sugar, oil (olive and vegetable) , salt, pepper, tea, coffee

Herbs and spices especially coriander, cinnamon, ginger,

Blocks or individual wrapped cheese.

Eggs are really appreciated

1 litre Long life milk, **honey is a most appreciated food**, noodles, tuna, 1 kg basmati rice, dates, jam (especially any red jam)



Gladwrap, tinfoil,

Sweet and Savoury Biscuits, Snacks for school lunches (even when home!),

Shampoo, Shaving Cream and shavers, Toothpaste and toothbrushes. Soap, deodorants

Garbage bags and bin liners (small and large)

We seemingly never have enough washing powder, dish washing detergents and household cleaning products.

For anyone wishing to make a donation, the Project Bank details are: Brigidine Asylum Seekers Trust Account: bsb: 083-004; a/c: 56-924-6603; NAB.



Please put your name on the entry and please email us at contact@basp.org.au after making a donation so we can send you a tax deductible receipt. We will send a newsletter but feel free to tell us that you don't want one.

Thanks to all of you. Here at BASP we value your moral support and it is only your practical help that keeps us going.



We hope that you feel a real part of this Project because you all are.

Whether you help us with money or give other practical support we values

all contributions. In terms of money, many give regular donations and those mean we have a steady income.

Others give a larg(er) amount sometimes and this means we can feel confident of being able to help all who come in for assistance. We do feel quite humbled by the number of you who contribute and, on behalf of those who have nothing and are looking for ways to survive we ask you to continue to give help as you can.

Nelson Mandela said "Do not look the other way; do not hesitate. Recognize that the world is hungry for action, not words. Act with courage and vision." We believe that we all at BASP are doing this in our own way. No matter what part you play, you are part of this.

Brigid Arthur

Libby Saunders

(BASP Coordinators)