

STRENGTH AND KINDNESS

Brigidine Asylum Seekers Project (BASP)



54 Beaconsfield Pde, Albert Park 3206
Ph: 96962107; barthur@basp.org.au
Website: www.BASP.org.au

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

Newsletter 124 April 2026

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

Regularisation : a new approach offered

After a year of deliberation a small group of five writers have developed a policy brief on the need for Australia to grant permanent residence for long-term refugees and people seeking asylum. We have named this Regularisation. . The case for regularisation is a case for efficient use of government resources and for permanency and security for refugees and people seeking asylum who have been living with visa insecurity for a prolonged period.

Regularisation is an important act of leadership. It shows government commitment to move away from a punitive refugee policy landscape and embrace, rather than vilify, refugees and people seeking asylum in Australia. This would assist in combating corrosive narratives of the far right and contest myths about mass migration. In this way, regularisation would make an important contribution to Australian society and provide a systemic approach to resolving long term visa insecurity.

The writers of the paper are: Sr Brigid Arthur, Assoc. Prof. Sara Dehm Dr Caroline Fleay, Marie Hapke, Prof. Philomena Murray Assoc. Prof. Anthea Vogl.

If you would like a copy it is available at <https://apo.org.au/person/333918>
Should this be a difficulty, we here at BASP are willing to make a copy and send it to you.

A time of ironies

It never ceases to amaze us how contradictory our Government can be in terms of approaches to asylum seekers. Most decisions are at the expense of those seeking refuge.

Several Iranian women's soccer players sought asylum in Australia in March 2026 after being branded "traitors" for not singing their national anthem during the Asia Cup, amid violent conflict in Iran. Only hours after offering humanitarian visas to five of these Iranian women soccer players, the Migration Amendment (2026 Measures No 1) Bill, was rushed through the Federal Parliament, allowing the Home Affairs Minister to ban certain nationalities fleeing conflict from applying for visas - most notably affecting people from Iran and Lebanon seeking safety. We can be very sympathetic towards the soccer players but at the same time legislate to be able to ban all those fleeing the Middle Eastern conflict is ironic to say the least, and evidences an intent not to help a whole cohort of people seems draconian. There certainly seems a tension between high-profile humanitarian gestures and broader, restrictive immigration policies. When individual cases (like the Biloela family) become focal points for media campaigns and community advocacy, political leaders have used ministerial discretion to bypass standard, restrictive procedures. This begins to look like buckling under pressure on the part of the Government and luck on the part of the few given a visa in this way.

Donations to the Brigidine Asylum Seekers Project are tax deductible

Australia's welcome to refugees

Recently the Refugee Council of Australia (RCOA) announced that officially in late 2025/early 2026 one million refugees will have arrived in Australia since World War II. RCOA has announced the theme for Refugee Week this year as "A Million Stories"; so many personal journeys of courage and resilience and overall a time to celebrate a legacy of giving safety and building an inclusive community.

BASP has been concerned almost solely with those who arrived here and sought protection (Protection visa – subclass 866) whether their arrival has been by boat or plane. Many of these are part of the million but some are not because they are still asylum seekers on temporary visas. And therefore not counted.



New arrivals in 2026

BASP is still trying to help people who are just arriving. They now virtually all come in by plane because the Government has effectively cut opportunities for people fleeing from persecution to come by boat. People now arrive on another visa—usually a tourist visa—and this normally is only for three months.

Within this short time they have to navigate the complexities of securing safe accommodation, obtaining basic necessities (food, medical care), and engaging legal help to lodge a Protection visa application. They have no work rights, no access to Medicare and typically no income. Their needs vary from very high level to the trivial. Speaking to one such man recently he said that a man he met in the first few days in a backpacker's place asked him if he needed a myki and he replied 'I haven't got your key'. Even with his limited English when he was shown the card and with an explanation he laughed heartily.

We will highlight the journeys of a few new arrivals in this situation.

A 34 year old man—we will call him GK—arrived in this country on the 16th March. His situation mirrors many asylum seekers from Ethiopia. He is Tigray and this means he is targeted by the TPLF (Tigray People's Liberation Front). GK is well educated with a Masters degree in Nuclear Physics and another in Clinical Medical Physics.

He explains that the military tried to force him to join the army and he refused arguing he had a medical background and was totally committed to saving people's lives not killing them. He was arrested and put in prison and escaped by his wife paying a bribe and arranging for him to leave the country. His wife has similar qualifications to himself and they have two young daughters. He is one who, while on a tourist visa, cannot even make application for protection.

By way of background, Tigrayan asylum seekers fleeing Ethiopia face a desperate humanitarian crisis, with hundreds of thousands displaced and over 141,000 seeking refuge in neighboring countries, particularly Sudan. They face severe risks of sexual violence, ethnic-based targeted attacks, and starvation, often staying in overcapacity camps, with many children making the journey alone.

A wonderful couple, Bill and Marie, are housing GK and BASP is trying to assist him to be ready to make an application for protection when he is able to.

Very recently a woman from Sri Lanka came in to our office. We will name her VA. Her husband arrived by boat in 2012 and waited over ten years for a protection visa. One week after being given this visa he died of a heart attack. His wife was allowed to come on a temporary visa but she is too frightened to go back to Sri Lanka because the authorities now know she had contact with her husband whereas before they believed he had just disappeared. VA has three children in Sri Lanka (aged 15 years old to 26). She is very worried about their safety.

Discussion Session

Wednesday, 20th May, 2026

2pm – 3.30pm

Brigidine Ministry Centre,
54 Beaconsfield Pde, Albert Park

Speaker:

**Amanda Kamara Co-Chief Executive Officer: Refugee
Council of Australia (RCOA)**



*Topic: Eroding humanity: A critique of Australia's policies relating to
asylum seekers. Where is the need for advocacy?*

Amanda has worked at RCOA in the position of Deputy Director for five years. In a world that seems more disturbed than ever Amanda is in a good position to give her reflections on what Australia can do and indeed what we can do.

As usual, there will be a catch up with BASP news

BASP Online Trivia Night—from the wonderful organizing team

St Mary's Hampton online trivia event in support of the **Brigidine Asylum Seekers Project** is back on Friday 1 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 1 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. Check the website for more details.

Booking and more information: cohdig.au/trivia



Soiree—Save the date

Cabrini Choir in collaboration with St Joseph's Music Ministry
Sunday 21st June 2-3 pm Cabrini Chapel Malvern

Palm Sunday 2026

BASP was part of a coalition of groups that organised this year's Palm Sunday rally and walk in Melbourne. On the 29th March, participants gathered at 1:00 pm on Princes Bridge (near Federation Square) and walked to the Lower Terrace of Birrarung Marr.

This year's theme was "Stronger Together: Walk for justice, respect and kindness".



We believe this was an extremely challenging reminder at this time of the world's history.

Renee was one of the marshals for the day and was responsible for keeping everything on track, along with Marie Hapke, who, as usual, was the extraordinary coordinator of the event.



Renee and Marie were the chief marshals for the event

The current Palm Sunday format has been happening every Palm Sunday since 2015. We believe it is important to maintain the custom in order to keep the conversation about refugee rights in the public eye.

Audrey Stratham organized a student tableau showing division and reconciliation. The students were from Xavier College and Sacred Heart Girls College.



Endalkachew (one of our BASP friends) again played his traditional music on the masinko.

Brigid interviewed Gipson (a young asylum seeker from West Papua), and Rasha Abbas:

Founder and executive director of Palestine Australia Relief and Action (PARA), who discussed the challenges faced by recently arrived families. The third interviewee was Rathy Barthlote, a Tamil refugee from Sri Lanka.



Photos are thanks to Paul Dunn



The event brought together diverse groups—including faith communities, school groups, and families—to call for better treatment, and acceptance of asylum seekers and refugees.

Yasmin Poole: MC for the day. Yasmin is a youth advocate and Plan International's National Ambassador

Libby's farewell

We met on the 2nd of April to farewell Libby who had been one of the Coordinators of BASP for eleven years. We regret not being able to have an open invitation but we had the constraints of space, The following are some excerpts from Brigid's and Rita's words on the occasion. (Rita spoke on behalf of the BASP Board). Rosemary Copland and Audrey Brown spoke on behalf of the Kildare Ministries Trustees.



Libby has been pivotal in steering BASP through some very difficult times for asylum seekers in Australia. She has been a wise and inspirational leader not just to BASP but within the wider circle of the small group of organisations that provide housing for asylum seekers. There have been so many implications for all these groups from off shore processing, life in Nauru and PNG and subsequent medivacating most of those people back to Australia, unexpected RoS visas offered and so on. Libby was amazingly the one for the job. We often needed to act very quickly during these years of 2015 to 2026. Libby does things and gets things in place while most of the rest of us are still thinking about it. She got housing for nearly 40 men after the Park hotel disaster and the Government decided to release the men almost overnight. No-one else offered to act for them and in default BASP did. Many of these men are now self sufficient and Libby has been a wonderful support for them.

Libby has been passionate about BASP as she contributed in every way she could. She has made a crucial contribution to the growth and well being of the Project and to the people who have come to us in all stages of their vulnerability.

One of the best things about working with Libby was having some fun! We would meet in the mornings for a cup of coffee and would often spend the time going over something funny – or the politics of the day. I have so enjoyed working with you Libby.

Most of the asylum seekers called Libby Sister Libby – after a while she gave up mentioning a husband children and grandchildren.

Libby has accepted working with all of us with grace. Libby just rolled up her sleeves and did what was needed – fixed the data base, rang the tradesmen, intervened when there was a fight in one of the houses – or when some mentally disturbed person was creating a bit of a havoc!

Libby is not one to turn away from a difficult situation – we had to evict a few people and it was sometimes a case of who blinked first – it was never Libby!

Libby built up a band of volunteers and I believe no one has done this better. Most people say: when will we meet? what sort of protocols do we establish? Libby meets potential volunteers, makes a decision about if and where they fit in (and then it works) – some have stayed for years, some have offered to do certain things and did a one off job or continue on. We talk about models – this should be written up because its simple – it works and it is uncomplicated. It also creates community.

Libby is always gracious – forthright and gracious – that's a great mix.

We often talk about the need for hope. Hope is not a disembodied word – it walks as a person Libby you were that person for many – and they will bless you for it. You said sometimes X will not cry at my funeral or something like that – I have never heard anyone complain about you – always they knew you wanted good for them. That wasn't always patting them on the head!

Libby, BASP is much stronger for your having been here and shaped it at crucial times. Your legacy will live on.



If small organisations are to run well, they need exceptional people.

Libby Saunders, as co-coordinator and co-CEO of BASP, has been instrumental in the success of our little organisation over the last 10 years.

Instead of retiring after a very successful career, Libby lent her deep experience and skills to BASP and worked with people seeking asylum. We may be a little organisation, but we make a deep and lasting impact. Housing and material needs have grown considerably in recent years, largely due to an increasingly adverse policy environment and a highly competitive private rental market.

Through Libby's exceptional work and relationships with real estate agencies, parish groups, and generous individuals, she has secured homes for particularly vulnerable women, families, and other people seeking asylum.

Libby has been instrumental in carefully matching individuals within shared housing, and she is deftly skilled at mediating concerns within shared housing arrangements, and between tenants and landlords.

Libby has managed to balance difficult decision making in the best interests of all involved. This is particularly important in a small NFP – BASP can't just give out money and homes to meet everyone's preferences, but has to make decisions on how to help, when to reduce help, and who we can't help. This is not the enjoyable part of working at BASP, but a necessary part, and Libby managed this well.

Libby has also maintained a collaborative approach with the broader sector, being across the changing policy environment, and supporting a large base of volunteers which allows BASP's meagre budget to stretch to so many people in need.

BASP is generally funded through community donations — and our donors and networks know, through Libby's words and actions, that so much is done with whatever is given to the organisation. The way she worked and the trusted relationships she established, enabled others to have trust in BASP.

Libby's flexibility and creativity in finding solutions to issues is truly exemplary, and that is part of what has made Libby's contributions far beyond that of a regular leader.

BASP is an organisation that is risk aware, not risk averse, and has only been able to do so much work at such scale with such small resources with the careful management of this approach due to the mix of skills and integrity that

Libby, as co-CEO, has brought to the organisation.

Much of Libby's work has been quiet, behind the scenes and unassuming, and relied on her ability to assess character and capacity, intuition, and not be afraid of putting forward an empathetic but also grounded understanding of reality with people.

Libby has worked 'above and beyond' - at all hours of day and night – and demonstrated her commitment to others.

She has always brought energy and 'unflappability' to what can be demanding work.

She has been able to assess and flexibly support many vulnerable people seeking asylum in our community, who would otherwise be on the street, homeless, or ill-cared for, have some

security, housing, and further options in pursuing a life that is safe in Australia.

Because of her ability to draw others into this work, many people in our community have had the opportunity to support people seeking asylum, make friends and build and expand the best of the Australian community spirit.

It is with deep gratitude that the Board of BASP farewells Libby Saunders from the Co-CEO role, and acknowledges that the legacy of her work is far beyond BASP.

It is within the lives people are now able to lead because of her focused ability to creatively find solutions to the material realities of people seeking asylum at an incredibly difficult moment in their life's journey.

Many have moved from the title 'person seeking asylum' to just 'person' while Libby has supported them— this is a wonderful legacy.

Strength and Kindness is the by-line of the Brigidine motto. It is no wonder that she was assumed as 'Sister Libby' so often — she fits that description to a T.

And there probably isn't a higher honour than that mistaken title being bestowed on her by so many folk BASP has helped.

Thank you Libby on behalf of the whole Board.





We pay tribute to Ken Foxworthy who died last month. Ken and his wife Colette have been staunch supporters of BASP for many years. Colette linked us to the local deanery and to St Mary's Hampton church.

Ken and Colette have faithfully come to BASP with groceries and it was always great to have a chat.

It seems Ken was very involved in dreaming up some of the quiz questions. We hope he sends some inspirations to Paul and the family for ongoing brain teasers!



The Foxworthy clan truly follow their parent's generosity and pursuit of justice and community well being.

Twice a year they hold a trivia night to help BASP. We have always said that the nights are such good fun that it is more than a fund raising activity but builds community. When covid forced us to go online, we thought it would all be less personal but that proved not to be so at all. It is a source of utter bewilderment for the rest of us that we can see each other, go into break out rooms and even for the least technical we manage to open the questions, answer them, talk to Paul and Nicola—and hear other family members in the background.!

Some years ago in the middle of winter and late in the evening a man rang BASP and said he and his wife and baby son had recently arrived in Australia and they needed housing. We believed they had accommodation in the city but could not stay where they were for long. The next morning we made arrangements to meet them and they said they were outside the Town Hall. It was cold and raining. Brigid went in to see them and found, to her horror, that they had been on the pavement in Swanston street all night. They had only come in the day before by plane and had no money to get any accommodation. Since then, over the years they have worked hard and after some time getting BASP help they became independent. It is sad that after so many years they still do not have a permanent visa. We believe their fears about the situation in their home country were absolutely real to them. We were able to supply them with a letter of support to give to the Immigration authorities and we received the following letter back.

Dear Sister Brigid,

Thank you very much for your valuable time and the support letter.

There are no words that truly capture how grateful we are for you, but we hope these come close. When we were facing one of the most difficult moments of our lives, your kindness, integrity, and steady reassurance became a light for us. You showed up with compassion when we needed it most, and that will stay with us forever.

Your care, empathy, and humanity made an immeasurable difference in our lives, and we carry that gratitude with us always. We will never forget what you did for us, or the way you made us feel seen, supported, and safe.

From the bottom of our hearts, thank you. We are forever thankful for you.

With sincere appreciation,

Recent Advocacy by BASP

Over recent months, BASP has continued to play an active role in national advocacy efforts, ensuring that the voices and experiences of people seeking asylum are represented in critical policy discussions. Two key pieces of work highlight this commitment.

1. Advocacy on the Migration Amendment (2026 Measures No. 1) Act

BASP joined with the Australian Refugee Action Network (ARAN) and other national organisations to raise serious concerns about the rapid passage of the Migration Amendment (2026 Measures No. 1) Act. The legislation was introduced and passed within just two days, with “limited opportunity for scrutiny or consultation,” as the ARAN letter notes.

BASP supported calls for urgent humanitarian action, including:

- Evacuation and safe travel for refugees stranded in Iran, Lebanon, and other Middle Eastern countries who already hold Australian humanitarian visas.
- Rapid processing of family reunion applications for immediate family members of Australian citizens and permanent residents.
- Permanent protection for people in Australia who have been waiting more than a decade for decisions, including many from Iran.
- Permanent visas for the men, women, and children transferred from Nauru and PNG who have now lived in Australia for up to twelve years.
- Reconsideration of voluntary return cases given the deteriorating situation in Iran.

The letter also expressed deep concern about the “excessive discretionary power” granted to the Minister for Home Affairs and warned that the amendments undermine Australia’s obligations under the 1951 Refugee Convention.

2. BASP’s Submission to the 2026–27 Humanitarian Program

BASP also made a comprehensive submission to the Department of Home Affairs on the composition and priorities of the 2026–27 Humanitarian Program. Drawing on 25 years of casework, the submission emphasised that Australia’s protection system must remain grounded in fairness, compassion, and international law.

Key recommendations included:

- Maintaining the 20,000-place Humanitarian Program as a minimum and increasing it in line with global need.
- Keeping complementary pathways separate so they do not reduce core humanitarian places.
- Prioritising immediate family reunion within the Special Humanitarian Program, noting the “unconscionable” backlog of 184,300 applicants, including 80,700 with close family in Australia.
- Guaranteeing work rights, access to education, and basic income support for people in legal limbo who have lived in Australia for years.
- Ending the limbo for transitory persons and providing pathways to permanency.
- Ending offshore processing and restoring fair, timely onshore protection processes.

The submission highlighted the profound harm caused by prolonged uncertainty, noting that many people supported by BASP have spent “years waiting, not living,” with visa conditions that prevent work, study, or stability.



Reflections on My First Months at BASP

By Renee Mazloun, Co-CEO

I stepped into the role of Co-CEO in November 2025, and in the months since, I have often found myself pausing to appreciate just how special this place is. BASP is unlike any organisation I have ever worked in. It is a community, a story, a set of values lived in real time — and it has been an extraordinary privilege to become part of it.

From my very first week, I felt the strength of the network that surrounds BASP. Working in the same building as Kildare Ministries and next door to the Brigidine Sisters has been a gift. It means that every day, I am reminded of the tradition, courage, and deep humanity that shaped this Project long before I arrived. I see the Sisters often, and each interaction reinforces what BASP stands for: hospitality, justice, compassion, and a fierce commitment to those who have been pushed to the margins.

One line I read that Sister Brigid Arthur wrote which stayed with me:

“It is a story of hospitality that moves beyond charity to welcome.” This is exactly what I have witnessed — not a service model, but a way of being with people.

A Community That Lives Its Values

What makes BASP unique is not only what we do, but how we do it. We work in a constantly shifting environment, yet we remain grounded in the belief that every person deserves dignity, safety, and the chance to rebuild their life. I love that our supports are tailored to the person in front of us — not restricted by rigid criteria or bureaucratic hurdles. That flexibility is not accidental; it is part of BASP’s DNA.

Over the past six months, I have met people whose resilience has reshaped my understanding of strength. People who have endured detention, displacement, discrimination, and profound loss — yet still show up with hope, humor, and determination. They have taught me that no obstacle is too big to overcome, and that courage often looks like simply continuing.

BASP has also shown me that despite the injustice around us, good people still exist — and they gather here.

Volunteers, donors, parish communities, schools, house providers, staff, and supporters form a network of justice that keeps hope alive. They are the reason BASP can respond quickly, compassionately, and without red tape. They are the reason people feel known, not processed.

Working With the Board and the Wider Kildare Ministries Community

I have deeply appreciated the BASP Board over the past six months. This role began during a period of significant change, and what has made all the difference is the Board’s steady presence, their willingness to take a call at any time, and their genuine availability whenever guidance or support was needed. I have felt their trust in me from the beginning, and that trust has allowed me to lead with confidence. Their commitment to BASP’s mission is matched by their commitment to the people who carry it, and I feel very fortunate to work with a Board that holds both governance and humanity so strongly together.

Libby’s eleven years of service at BASP are acknowledged with appreciation. During her time with BASP, Libby contributed strong work and showed genuine care for the people supported by BASP. She played an important role in forming what is now the housing framework, which has helped ensure fewer people seeking asylum were left without a safe and stable place to stay. Her work in this area continues to shape how BASP responds to housing needs today.

Libby’s service is sincerely appreciated, and warm wishes are extended for her future.

The Kildare Ministries community has also been a source of joy. Connecting with schools, teachers, youth, principals, and faith leaders has been one of the highlights of my role. I have felt extraordinarily welcomed by individuals such as Jane Colopy and Peter Houlahan, who ensured that I was embraced when I was still a stranger. And having Nicole Mangelsdorf close by has been invaluable — she is a leader who carries the KM values with integrity and warmth, and her support has meant a great deal.

Learning From Brigid

It is impossible to speak about BASP without speaking about Sister Brigid Arthur. Working alongside her has been one of the greatest privileges of my career. BASP is not a workplace for Brigid — it is a home she built from scratch so that the most vulnerable people in our community would always have a door open to them when so many others closed.

The more I deepen my working relationship with Brigid, the more my admiration grows. Her clarity, courage, and unwavering commitment to justice are matched only by her humility. I don’t think I will ever meet a more selfless person with a heart that fits the world.

Feeling at Home

As time passes, I feel increasingly connected to the BASP community and to the purpose that drives us. I feel blessed to work somewhere so person-centered, so values-driven, and so deeply human. Even on difficult days — and there are many in this line of work — I know that goodness surrounds me. And because of that, everything will be okay. To everyone who has welcomed me, supported me, and had faith in me: thank you. I am honored to walk alongside you. BASP is a rare place — a place where justice is lived, not spoken; where community is built, not assumed; and where every person is treated as though their dignity matters, because it does. I look forward to continuing this journey with all of you.

The new Coalition immigration policy

As we write this newsletter, the Coalition is foreshadowing what their new immigration policy will look like. It sounds hardline, "Australian values"-focused designed to reduce net overseas migration and increase scrutiny of arrivals. It includes several elements described by commentators as a "Trump-style" approach. Can anyone actually describe what Australian values are and what 'vetting' would look like?

Angus Taylor is threatening to "re-assess entirely" the visas issued to over 2000 Palestinians after October 7, 2023, labeling them a "clear risk" under a new Coalition immigration policy. This is in spite of all the checks already carried out by ASIO before allowing these people to come as refugees.

This certainly sounds like the recently set up U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) which is conducting a nationwide crackdown on undocumented immigrants and those suspected of being in the U.S. illegally. This approach includes increased surveillance, mass detention, and high-volume removals. Amnesty International Australia immediately condemned the Coalition's proposed immigration overhaul as "divisive, discriminatory, and lacking in humanity," warning that the policies risk undermining Australia's multicultural foundations.

It is disturbing when leaders give disinformation in such announcements. Taylor cited the December 2025 Bondi Beach terror attack to support stricter immigration policies, claiming a visa holder was responsible, although one shooter was Australian-born and the other had lived in Australia since 1998. Such distortion of the facts is certainly not fair.

Among the people BASP supports are many Iranians. They are facing an extraordinarily difficult time now with frequently cut internet and phone access, leaving family members here unable to check on loved ones during violent crackdowns. Many fear for the safety of their families in Iran, with reports suggesting that they are being targeted for speaking out. One woman we were speaking to spoke of the feeling of helplessness because she felt guilty that she has a better life, while her family in Iran is frightened and suffering. Another man with a wife and two adult children still in Iran seemed not even able to talk about what was happening. One of our volunteers alerted us to another of our Iranian friends who is really upset because her mother is ill and her brother and sister are all the family she has and they are in an area that has been attacked.

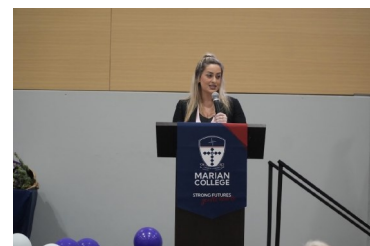
Kate Beetson is an amazing gardener who, for many years, has spent endless time in the garden at 60 Beaconsfield Pde (a Brigidine house used to give accommodation to women seeking asylum). Kate is over 90 but can still be found pottering in the garden. Her daughter Penny and sometimes Roger her son, and even Penny's son, Angus, are all called in as 'extra hands' when needed. Thanks so much Kate and family for such faithful care of the garden for so long. It is a little oasis for the women in the house.



Renee Mazloun Represents BASP at Marian College International Women's Day Event

BASP Co-CEO, Renee Mazloun, was recently invited to speak at Marian College Sunshine West as part of their International Women's Day celebrations.

The event was a truly inspiring occasion, bringing together a diverse and empowering community of women to reflect on this year's theme of *justice*. Marian College created a welcoming and inclusive environment that celebrates strength and compassion



During her address, Renee shared personal reflections on the meaning of justice and the experiences that have shaped her commitment to advocating for fairness and dignity. She spoke about the profound influence of her mother's resilience and strength, and how this continues to guide her passion for standing up against injustice and supporting others.

We would like to extend our sincere thanks to Marian College Sunshine West for the invitation and for hosting such a meaningful and impactful event. The College is a wonderful example of a community that nurtures inclusion, respect, and leadership in the next generation.



BASP is honored to have been part of this special day and looks forward to continued opportunities to engage with and support initiatives that empower women and promote justice.

Work and housing updates

Work and training:

A number of the people have commenced new study and work opportunities including a security training course, a restaurant and cafe training program; casual work on a production line; hospital cleaning work; in-home carer work; a retail and design entrepreneur training program; a lab technician training program; and qualification equivalency programs.

Housing movements:

Two new arrivals - one being supported with housing at Camara St and the other staying with community hosts.

Two people in rent free accommodation making preparations to move into independent rentals; one moved into independent rental.

Offer of housing from a community member for a single man or woman.

One household in a position to start contributing to their utility bills; another in agreeing to start contributing to their rent.

Housing needs:

Three of the people we support with no rent or low rent housing have been a terrific help in providing gardening, handy man and removals assistance. Keeping up with these needs would otherwise be very difficult for BASP. We do struggle when it comes to moving furniture, which is a big demand, especially donated goods. Volunteers that have a trailer or van who could help us move things from time-to-time would be much appreciated.

One referral to the HEF grant for rental assistance for a recently arrived asylum seeker who is renting a room with a friend.

Two referrals from other agencies where we were unable to provide support because they were both women who had arrived on partner visas who are experiencing domestic violence. They were both worried that they would threaten the partner visa application by leaving their partner but concerned for their safety if they stay.

Strengthening Collaboration Between Saltbush and BASP

Saltbush and BASP have collaborated for many years, but the past year has seen this partnership grow in frequency and impact. It has been a particularly strong period of connection between two of Kildare Ministries' community works, with both teams working closely to support people seeking asylum in practical and meaningful ways.

BASP Co-CEO Renee Mazloun has often spoken about how much she enjoys working alongside Keely Reade, CEO of Saltbush. In a relatively short time, the working relationship between the two leaders has become one marked by trust, responsiveness, and shared values. Their collaboration has already led to several positive outcomes for both communities.



Recently, Saltbush required painting work for their houses. They immediately thought of BASP, and BASP was able to send two of their asylum seekers Rahul and Riaz to assist. The two spent four days at Saltbush and did an excellent job, and Saltbush expressed deep appreciation for their contribution.

Another highlight of the partnership was Saltbush's water safety program with Life Saving Victoria. When Saltbush received funding for the initiative, they reached out to BASP straight away. A group of 15 asylum seekers travelled to Saltbush for a full day of learning, connection, and recreation. BASP organised the bus, and Saltbush created a warm and engaging program. The feedback from participants was overwhelmingly positive. Many spoke about how welcomed they felt, how much they learned, and how valuable it was to make new friends. The children who attended had a particularly joyful experience — the kind of day they could return to school and proudly share about after the holidays.

These shared activities also strengthened the working relationships between staff at both organisations. Saltbush has long supported BASP, particularly when emergency accommodation has been needed, and BASP remains deeply grateful for Saltbush's ongoing responsiveness.



For anyone seeking time away in quiet nature, with Bulnarring Beach just metres away, BASP encourages the community to consider Saltbush. It is a place of rest, reflection, and welcome. Both organisations look forward to continuing to build on this strong and growing partnership in the years ahead.



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

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

The following are still very much appreciated:

- 1 kg sugar, oil (olive and vegetable), salt, pepper, tea, coffee
- Herbs and spices, especially coriander, cinnamon
- Blocks or individual wrapped cheese
- **Eggs are really appreciated**



At present we need full cream long-life milk, noodles, tuna, basmati rice, dates, (), cans of fruit



Gladwrap, tinfoil

Flat bread in sealed wrapping, as people often ask for bread

Sweet and savoury biscuits, snacks for school lunches (even when home!)

Shampoo, shaving cream and shavers, toothpaste and toothbrushes, soap, deodorant

Garbage bags and bin liners (small and large)

We seemingly never have enough washing powder, dish washing detergents or 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 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.

Again thanks to you all for the wonderful support you continue to offer BASP.

The world seems fraught at present. Many of the places figuring in the news with bombings and attacks on civilians and so on are those where some few have escaped from and are asylum seekers here in Australia.



In the midst of all this we need to inject some hope. At BASP we try to do this in different ways—helping where we can those on the periphery of society because of their whole refugee experience and speaking out in defence of a welcoming, just and kind approach to those seeking asylum. We are able to do both of these only because of the support we get from so many.

As Pope Leo XIV said recently 'There is no justice without compassion' He was referring to the treatment of newly arrived people. He has emphasized the four verbs—welcome, protect, promote, and integrate—as the necessary approach to migrants and refugees.

Renee Mazloun
Co CEO

Brigid Arthur