

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

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

STRENGTH AND KINDNESS

Brigidine Asylum Seekers Project (BASP)
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Discussion Session



Wednesday, 18th November



3pm – 4.30pm



**Brigidine Ministry Centre,
54 Beaconsfield Pde
Albert Park**



**A critical point in Australia's immigration policy—
in particular relating to people seeking asylum**

Speaker: David Manne

David Manne is a refugee legal advocate and a writer on refugee issues. He is the principal lawyer at Refugee Legal, a community legal centre that provides legal assistance to asylum seekers and refugees.

The discussion will provide an opportunity for members to reflect on Australia's current policies governing asylum seekers.

The Brigidine Asylum Seekers Project (BASP) celebrates 25 years

Renee Mazloun (BASP CEO) asked me to reflect on the 25 years of the life of BASP. I am grateful to have the opportunity. However, I am also daunted because I won't be able to include much of what I would like to. The following are a few snippets. It really feels like telling a story with many sub-plots of real lives that involve heroism and heartache, generosity and quiet resilience.

The story involves the generosity of members of the BASP community who have responded to real and often quite desperate needs of people who have sought our help.

It is a story of hospitality that moves beyond charity to welcome.

It is a testament to the power of smallness – doing what larger bureaucracies can't by responding to immediate human needs without red tape.

It describes a culture that isn't just about providing a bed or food but about friendship and care.

It pays tribute to the relationships between BASP and both those seeking asylum and community members willing to help.

The story is more about a community than a formal NGO.

It is the story of the BASP community who wrapped around those many individuals who fled to look for safety and a better life.

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Beginnings

The Project began in 2001. Its inspiration came from a Brigidine Justice group. We were uneasy about a growing harsh rhetoric about asylum seekers that was coming from the government so in July-August we decided to establish a small group to explore the issue of asylum issues.

At first the Project was seen as a Brigidine ministry, but it quickly attracted a broader mix of people.

In allowing BASP to use their name, the Brigidines have committed themselves to taking a public stance towards the issue of asylum seekers.

What we set out to do

Our main objective from the beginning was to provide practical support to asylum seekers. Our other objective has been that practical support must go together with trying to change policies and practices through advocacy – the two aims should be kept in balance. For example, while providing housing and rent assistance to people at risk of destitution, we have kept up our advocacy for permanent visas and work rights to be granted to all asylum seekers on temporary visas.

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Detention as a first emphasis

For the first fifteen years after BASP was set up, a major focus was around immigration detention. The injustice of this policy and the cruelty with which Australia was treating asylum seekers were the

impetus for our decision to establish the group, and for many years our work revolved around doing what we could to help those in detention (including assistance when people were released) while advocating and agitating to change the policies. The decisions we made and actions we took during this period offer some insight into the BASP approach.

BASP began with myself visiting people, including families with children, who were being held in detention. During the early years, when no other refugee support groups had gained access to detention facilities, BASP saw how the detainees were completely isolated from the outside world and deprived of social interaction.

There was little or no public understanding then of the real impact of the government's policies on asylum and mandatory detention or the cruel treatment of people in the centres.

The year we began was a year of intense political activity about asylum seekers. In 2001, Australia fundamentally and permanently shifted its political stance on asylum seekers, transforming border protection into a central national security issue that determined the outcome of that year's federal election. The year was defined by the Tampa affair, the creation of the 'Pacific Solution', and the 'Children Overboard' scandal, resulting in the Howard Liberal-National government being re-elected with an increased majority.

Throughout the life of BASP our approach has been to do what is possible even when it was obvious that the real systemic changes were beyond our control to achieve. Detention with all its immoral aspects became the first area where there were practical things to do.

Pamela Curr (a wonderful ally of BASP who was working at the Asylum Seeker Resource Centre (ASRC) at the time) and myself visited MIDC several times a week, challenged authorities, demanded transparency, and combined this with direct, practical support for asylum seekers. This included things like bringing in cooked food, extra blankets and small TVs, contacting relatives in the community for people in detention, and many such practical comforts. At the same time Catherine Kelly, a Co- Coordinator, qualified as a Migration Agent and did the paperwork involved for some whose families are here now only because of her painstaking work.

Our initial visits to detention centres led to a 'rippling out' effect, where one person we had got to know from an initial visit would put us in contact with another person who had had no contact with the outside world and needed help.

One real need was to get lawyers for those who had no one to prepare their case for application for refugee status. I managed to get a whole group of 'baby lawyers' willing to help. I would pick them up in the city after 5 in the evening and take them out to meet detainees who needed legal help.

Some journalists wanted access to the centres to get stories. I took Michael Gordon, a very respected writer for *The Age* – to meet young Afghan minors. Unfortunately, the guards realised who Michael was and the likely result of his meeting these young men and they escorted Michael and myself out of the centre.

Other individuals heard about visiting and because it was a challenge to 'get through the ropes' to visit, I spent quite a bit of time helping would-be visitors with the paperwork and arranging a first visit for many who initially felt somewhat intimidated about visiting by themselves. We achieved quite a high level of community awareness that would not have happened without the visiting.

It was obvious that the need was to change the cruel, brutal treatment by reframing it as a violation of human rights and dignity, rather than a necessary administrative process as it is described in official

policies. We told stories and because they were real, many were horrified by what Australia was doing in our name.

We could call it a proactive strategy – and one that BASP favours.

In order to become informed so that we could advocate effectively, Pamela and myself travelled together and individually to most detention centres in Australia including those in capital cities as well as remote places such as Scherger (NT) and Yongah Hill (WA), Inverbrackie (SA), and Christmas Island. The aim was to learn about and bring attention to the particular plight of people in these isolated locations to try to determine what was happening and how the people detained could be helped. We used these visits to talk about what was happening, to write to Members of Parliament and where possible to help some of those being detained.

Another initiative involving visiting was an excursions program. Pamela and myself had succeeded in being allowed to take groups out for picnics and other recreational activities. This so-called Designated Persons Program – initially allowing outings for unaccompanied minors and later extending to families and children – lasted five years.

In 2015, the Australian Border Force was given control of the immigration detention centres. Its behaviour was much more draconian: outings were scrapped, the pretence being that they were a threat to security. This was in spite of the fact that no one was ever not returned to the centre, nor was any crime committed by those taken out for the day.

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BASP has always tried to intervene to help quickly and to the extent of our capability. I will describe three events of particular significance– all related to an acute need for asylum seekers to be housed after they were released from detention. What we achieved demonstrated two things about BASP: we could move quickly, and we had the ability to achieve a lot in a short space of time.

The first of these three major events happened just after BASP was set up.

I began making regular visits to the MIDC in the middle of 2001. Just a few months later we managed to get several men released from detention and a Brigidine house at 60 Beaconsfield Pde was set up to house three men.

Over the next year or so BASP succeeded in securing the release of 17 people by paying a bond, and found housing for any of them who did not have family or friends they could live with. Because they had previously been in the community, many had connections.

The second time BASP responded rapidly to provide a lot of housing was in 2013. In the middle of that year, Tony Burke was appointed Immigration Minister in the Labor government, which had promised to stop keeping children in immigration detention. Within a few months the government got all families with children out of detention

They had six weeks to find a house. The asylum seekers were given access to very old computers to make contact with real estate agents and try to negotiate a rental property. The computers often didn't work, and many people had no computer skills or prior experience in doing this. Pamela Curr and myself visited them almost every day, helping to find houses for rent and taking people out to see them.

We helped about 60 families to find housing. We also helped many to find jobs, which enabled them to support themselves from then on.

A third time was finding homes for men released from hotel detention (2022)

The third time BASP responded rapidly to provide a lot of housing was in 2022, when dozens of men were released from detention in hotels to which they had been transferred from Nauru and Manus Island. They were held in isolation in city hotels in Melbourne for two years. Upon the release of each group of men in March and April 2022, the government funded accommodation in hotels or motels for three to six weeks while longer-term housing was sought. No group came forward to assist with this except BASP. In a short space of time, we found accommodation for 36 men. Libby Saunders did an amazing job managing all this housing. As well as using spare rooms in existing houses, BASP leased 14 new places. Other places were made available by generous supporters in the community who offered homes for free or at reduced rent.

Finding homes for the men – many of whom were certainly unable to share accommodation due to traumatic experiences that had left them with significant mental health problems – was a huge undertaking and very demanding for BASP.

Furnishing so many houses also presented a challenge. BASP staff, supporters and volunteers mobilised during this period to achieve the seemingly impossible.

BASP was ready to move quickly to organise significant resources being put into the project of housing these men partly because we have fewer organisational constraints than other groups. We see this as justification for continuing with a structure that is flat and has virtually no layers of bureaucracy.

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Friendship and kindness

From the beginning, we have avoided the trappings of bureaucracies. What seems most important are the twin elements of friendship and kindness.

Often our volunteers will tell us that what began as an act of kindness on their part towards an asylum seeker or family ends up with friendship and interaction on a friendship basis not a helping one. While volunteers may initially feel they are ‘rescuers’, the relationship often becomes a two-way exchange that enriches both lives. The same has been true for so many others – donors to BASP have been touched by the plight of other human beings. Others feel desperate contemplating the links between war and genocide and displacement of people and have supported BASP because it is a practical and humane response to these major moral issues. Much of BASP has been about building relationships based on equality, trust, and mutual respect. ‘Befriending’ asylum seekers has been a specific end in itself.

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Courage and ‘bucking the system’

The need to be courageous underlies many aspects of how BASP operates. Courage is needed to avoid becoming too risk-averse and it is needed to speak out against the status quo. It is needed to be innovative and try new things without knowing whether they will succeed. It is also needed to continue to rely on moral judgement rather than rules and operating procedures.



The advantages of being small

From the beginning we have said we would stay small and try to fill the gaps.

Our vision is that a lot of the most important things that we can help asylum seekers to achieve are not measurable. We know how much money we receive and give out, how much food we provide and so on, but a level of happiness, hope, and a sense that life is going somewhere, those things cannot be measured.

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Paying tribute to many.

One of the main aspects of my reminiscences are the people – those who are seeking protection in our country and those who have enabled help to be given through BASP. I would love to fill page by page with your names. Clearly, I can't do that.

I have to name Catherine Kelly and Libby Saunders both of whom acted as Coordinators over the twenty-five years. They were both amazing people. As are all the others who have made BASP what it is.

There are the behind-the-scenes people like those who have donated their superannuation or both large and small donations to fund the help given, those who have fund raised, collected money and food, did so many applications for the processing of claims for refugee status, organised picnics, provided accommodation and so on.

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Moving forward

There will be more chapters of the story. We have shifted seamlessly to a new group carrying on the work of BASP under the leadership of Renee, Nat, Marion and Julie.

On a personal note I have had the opportunity to be involved in life-giving work with such wonderful people and for that I am so grateful.

Sr Brigid Arthur AO



Australia's Refugee Policies: What's at Stake for People Seeking Asylum?

Immigration and asylum have become prominent issues in Australia's political debate. Questions about population growth, housing, border security and migration levels are increasingly influencing discussions about the country's refugee and humanitarian policies.

An article published in The Age on 17 September highlighted the changing political landscape and public attitudes towards immigration and refugee protection. According to the article, two-thirds of Australians surveyed supported reducing the refugee intake, increasing resources for deportations and restricting immigration from countries perceived as posing an extremist threat.

These views reflect a significant public debate about Australia's migration settings. However, it is important to distinguish between overall migration and the separate responsibility to protect people fleeing persecution and conflict.

“Paul Power of the Refugee Council of Australia has emphasised this distinction. *“With the Humanitarian Program making up just 6% of net overseas migration over the past 20 years, the reduction in the refugee intake will have little impact on overall numbers but will have devastating consequences for people in need of safety.”*

His comments highlight a central question: what are the consequences when decisions about population and migration become closely tied to decisions about refugee protection?

Why does this matter?

Behind every policy announcement and every intake figure are people whose lives are shaped by decisions made in Canberra.

For someone fleeing persecution, conflict or serious human rights abuses, access to protection can mean the difference between continued danger and a safe future.

Reducing humanitarian places can mean fewer opportunities for people in desperate circumstances to rebuild their lives in safety.

For someone fleeing persecution, conflict or serious human rights abuses, access to protection can mean the difference between continued danger and the possibility of a safe future. Reducing humanitarian places can mean fewer opportunities for people in desperate circumstances to rebuild their lives in safety.

It is also important to recognise that net overseas migration is a broad population measure, not a count of refugees alone. It includes people arriving for different reasons, including international students, temporary workers, permanent migrants and humanitarian entrants, as well as the effect of people departing Australia. Australia's Refugee and Humanitarian Program serves a distinct purpose: providing protection and resettlement for people who need it.

[Australian Government, Refugee and Humanitarian Program and Net Overseas Migration.](#)

Debates about housing, infrastructure, economic pressures and border management deserve careful consideration. But these discussions should also recognise Australia's international protection obligations and the human consequences of restricting access to safety.



Where do the political parties stand?

Australia's major political parties have different approaches to immigration levels, border enforcement and humanitarian protection. The following outlines the positions described in the recent political debate.

Australian Labor Party (ALP)

Labor has pursued a reduction in net overseas migration, setting a planning target of 225,000 by 2028. Its measures have included tighter rules for international students, changes affecting student family members, a ballot system for some Working Holiday Maker visas, and increased compliance measures targeting visa overstayers.

The government has linked migration settings to housing supply and infrastructure pressures, while also arguing that excessively deep cuts could harm the economy.

The following outlines the positions described in the recent political debate.

Liberal-National Coalition

The Coalition has proposed halving Australia's annual refugee intake from 20,000 to 10,000 places if elected in 2028. It has also advocated for the return of Temporary Protection Visas, which would provide temporary rather than permanent protection for eligible refugees.

These proposals would represent a significant reduction in the number of people Australia resettles through its humanitarian program.

One Nation

One Nation has advocated for substantially reducing migration, proposing a combined cap of 130,000 permanent and temporary visas annually. Its stated positions have included withdrawing Australia from the United Nations Refugee Convention, strengthening border controls, introducing an eight-year waiting period for citizenship or welfare access, and restricting entry from countries associated with ideologies it considers incompatible with Australian values.

The Australian Greens

The Greens have criticised the major parties' emphasis on reducing migration and increasing enforcement. They have raised concerns about offshore processing, indefinite detention and restrictions on work and study for people seeking asylum.

Their proposed approach includes expanding humanitarian and family-reunion pathways and removing punitive waiting periods.

These summaries describe policy positions reported in the current debate. Proposals and implementation status can change, and individual policies should be checked against the parties' latest official statements.



The role of community support

At BASP, we see the human side of these debates through our work with people seeking asylum. Public policy is not an abstract issue for the people we support; it can affect their security, their opportunities, their families and their ability to participate in community life.

While governments determine immigration and protection policies, local communities can help create a more welcoming environment. Through practical assistance, social connection, advocacy and opportunities to participate in community life, we can help people feel supported and valued while they navigate uncertainty.

Our partnerships with generous community organisations, volunteers and supporters demonstrate the difference that compassion and solidarity make. A welcoming community cannot resolve every challenge created by policy, but it can help reduce isolation and create opportunities for connection, dignity and belonging.

As Australia continues to debate its approach to migration and asylum, we believe it is vital that the people behind the statistics remain part of the conversation.

People seeking asylum are more than numbers in a policy debate. They are individuals and families seeking safety, stability and the opportunity to build a future. Their need for protection, dignity and humanity must remain central to how we discuss Australia's refugee policies.

Guest Speaker Spotlight: Understanding Statelessness in Australia

On 12 August, BASP welcomed [Katie Robertson](#), Associate Director of the Peter McMullin Centre on Statelessness, who delivered a thought-provoking presentation on statelessness and its impact on individuals and families in Australia.

Statelessness occurs when a person is not recognised as a citizen or national by any country under the operation of its laws. While often invisible, statelessness affects millions of people worldwide and can arise due to discrimination, gaps in nationality laws, conflict, displacement, changes in national borders, or a lack of birth registration.

Katie shared findings from national research examining the experiences of stateless people in Australia. One of the key messages was that statelessness is often poorly understood and inadequately recognised, despite its profound impact on people's lives. The research found that stateless people frequently experience barriers to education, healthcare, employment, housing and freedom of movement, while also facing a deep sense of uncertainty and exclusion from belonging.

The presentation highlighted that Australia has ratified international conventions aimed at protecting stateless people and preventing statelessness, yet there is currently no formal statelessness determination procedure or dedicated visa category for stateless persons. As a result, many individuals face prolonged periods of uncertainty within the migration system.

Attendees learned that, as at February 2024, 5,757 stateless people were recorded as living in Australia on visas, with Rohingya, Kurdish, Kuwaiti Bidoon and Palestinian communities among those most commonly affected. The discussion also explored the unique challenges stateless people encounter in seeking protection, residency and citizenship pathways.

Particularly powerful were the lived-experience accounts shared throughout the presentation, which described the feeling of living in limbo, separated from family, restricted in opportunities, and uncertain about the future. These stories reinforced the importance of legal recognition, effective protection mechanisms and pathways to citizenship that allow people to live with dignity, security and a genuine sense of belonging.

The session generated rich discussion among BASP members and volunteers, highlighting the close connection between statelessness, forced displacement and the experiences of many people seeking asylum and protection. We sincerely thank [Katie Robertson](#) for sharing her expertise and helping our community better understand this important but often overlooked human rights issue.



Our sincere thanks to Katie for her generous time and for raising awareness of the realities faced by stateless people in Australia.

A Warm Evening of Generosity at St John's, Camberwell



St John's Anglican Church in Camberwell raised an amazing **\$3,000 for BASP** at a dinner on Friday evening, bringing together around 50 people for a wonderful night of food, friendship and generosity.

The evening was organised by Karen Dew and the parish's Refugee Group, whose members have supported BASP for many years. Hans prepared a delicious Sri Lankan dinner, and the gathering was filled with warmth and a genuine spirit of welcome for people newly arrived in Australia.

It was especially lovely to see Helen Howells, the group's very first convenor, who was there to share in the occasion and celebrate the continuing commitment of the parish community.

Brigid spoke on the evening to thank Karen and all those in the parish who have supported BASP over so many years. Their ongoing generosity and compassion make a real difference, not only through the funds they raise, but also through the welcome, connection and sense of belonging they help create.

A heartfelt thank you to Karen, Hans, Helen and everyone at St John's for a wonderful evening and for their longstanding support of BASP.

BASP's Second Trivia Night of the Year

BASP's second trivia night for the year took place on 9 October, bringing together a wonderful turnout of big-hearted people who share our commitment to BASP and its cause. It was a fantastic evening of fun, laughter and community spirit, all in support of BASP's work.

A huge thank you to St Mary's Hampton, who organise our trivia nights and put so much time and effort into making them such a success. While we come together for just two hours on the night, we know that many hours of planning, preparation and behind-the-scenes work go into ensuring everything runs smoothly and that everyone has a great time.

Thank you to everyone who attended, supported the evening and contributed so generously, as well as to all the donors who donated and other support through the trivia night. Your generosity and enthusiasm make these events possible and help BASP continue its important work.

A very special thank you goes to the Foxworthy family, who continue to honour the legacy of their father, Ken, by hosting BASP trivia. Their ongoing commitment is a wonderful tribute to Ken and to the spirit of generosity and community that he inspired. We are so grateful to everyone who gives their time, energy and support to make these evenings possible. Thank you for being part of the BASP community and helping us make a difference!



Connecting with Schools: Building a More Just and Compassionate Community

BASP continues to have strong and meaningful connections with schools, both within our Kildare Ministries family and beyond. We welcome every opportunity to engage with students, whether through visits to our office to learn more about BASP's work or invitations to speak at school events about social justice, the common good and the importance of standing alongside people who are vulnerable.

Recently, students from **St Aloysius** and **St Columba's** visited the BASP office, taking the opportunity to learn more about our work and lend a helping hand. It was wonderful to welcome these students, share our mission with them and see their willingness to get involved and make a difference.



We also welcome invitations to speak with students about how we can all contribute to creating a more just and compassionate society. Helping young people understand the experiences of people seeking asylum and refugees, and exploring how ordinary people can support the most vulnerable in our community, is an important part of our work.

BASP CEO Renee Mazloum has recently had the privilege of speaking with students at Star of the Sea College in Brighton, Killester College in Springvale, and Brigidine College Indooroopilly in Brisbane. Each visit has been a wonderful opportunity to share BASP's mission, raise awareness and encourage students to consider how they can contribute to a fairer and more welcoming Australia.

It is particularly heartening to see the enthusiasm of teachers, parents and students who are eager to learn about BASP and find ways to support our work. Their interest and generosity remind us of the strength of community and the difference we can make when we work together.

A heartfelt thank you to all five schools for welcoming BASP, for encouraging their students to engage with these important issues, and for their willingness to learn, reflect and take action.

Together, we are stronger. The support of school communities helps sustain BASP's advocacy and practical support for people seeking asylum, and gives us great hope for a future shaped by compassion, justice and a commitment to the common good.

Celebrating Our Partnership with Macedon Ranges Rural Australians for Refugees (MRRAR)



BASP remains proud of our strong partnership with Macedon Ranges Rural Australians for Refugees (MRRAR), whose ongoing generosity and commitment continue to support BASP and the people seeking asylum who access our services.

Recently, Renee was invited to attend a fundraising lunch in Woodend, bringing together community members who gathered in support of BASP and our work. Renee spoke about BASP's programs and the support we provide, the current climate in which we operate, and the political landscape and its impact on people seeking asylum in Australia.

The afternoon was filled with meaningful conversations, a delicious lunch and dessert, and a very entertaining raffle draw! Most importantly, it was a wonderful opportunity for BASP and the MRRAR community to reconnect, strengthen relationships and reaffirm our shared commitment to supporting people seeking asylum. We are incredibly grateful for MRRAR's continued advocacy, generosity and belief in our work.

A Day of Connection, Community and Country

MRRAR recently organised another special excursion for BASP participants, this time to a private farm generously opened to us by its owners. With transport arranged by MRRAR, BASP staff met participants at Southern Cross Station before everyone travelled together by minibus to spend the day in the beautiful countryside.

Around 20 people seeking asylum joined the excursion, enjoying a day of laughter, connection and new experiences. Lunch, dessert and snacks were provided, ensuring everyone could relax and enjoy the day together.

There was something for everyone to enjoy. Children had the opportunity to meet and interact with goats, dogs and horses, brush the horses' hair, and even draw on the horses. A tractor with an attached trailer provided plenty of excitement, with children thoroughly enjoying the rides. A soccer coach also joined the group, bringing everyone together for a friendly game of soccer that encouraged teamwork, participation and plenty of fun. With beautiful weather, a welcoming farm environment and wonderful company, the day offered opportunities to make new friends, reconnect with familiar faces and create happy memories together.

A heartfelt thank you to MRRAR, the generous farm owners, the soccer coach, and everyone who contributed their time, resources and care to make this day possible.



Why Days Like This Matter

For people seeking asylum, opportunities to experience joy, build friendships and feel part of a community can make a meaningful difference. The challenges of navigating an unfamiliar environment, uncertainty, and isolation can make it difficult to establish social connections and find a sense of belonging.

Excursions like this provide more than just a day out. They create safe and welcoming spaces where people can relax, share experiences, connect with others and enjoy the simple pleasures of spending time together. For children, these experiences offer opportunities to explore, play and create positive memories. For adults, they provide a chance to build friendships, strengthen support networks and feel welcomed by their local community. At BASP, we know that belonging is built through meaningful relationships and shared experiences. The generosity of community groups like MRRAR helps make these moments possible, reminding people seeking asylum that they are valued, welcomed and not alone.



We are deeply grateful for our ongoing partnership with MRRAR and for a community that continues to show what compassion, inclusion and solidarity look like in action.

Stories of Safety, Connection and New Beginnings

A safe home is the beginning of possibility.

A Safe Home and a New Beginning

At the end of September, BASP secured a home in Melbourne's west for a mother and her two young children. After weeks of partnership with other agencies, the family was able to settle into a safe and stable place to call home.

Community donations of furniture and household essentials helped transform an empty house into a welcoming home. Soon after, Amina, a young woman previously staying in a very small room, joined the family.

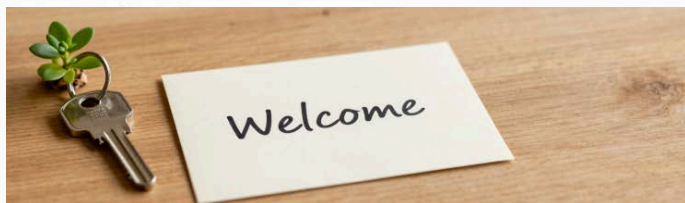
Sharing a home with people newly met can be challenging, but Phoebe and Amina have approached their new living arrangement with warmth and positivity. Phoebe loves to cook for the household, while Amina has been practising English by speaking with the children.

Their story shows how stable housing, practical support and a welcoming environment create space for confidence, connection and hope.



With the right support and a welcoming environment, so much is possible.

From Safety to Belonging

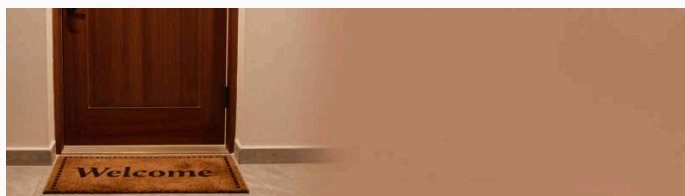


BASP recently welcomed Hamed, a Ugandan advocate who arrived in Australia seeking protection. Without local connections or a place to live, he faced the uncertainty of starting again. Through refugee legal services and BASP, Hamed accessed legal support, stable housing and emergency relief.

BASP also helped him find food, clothing, household essentials, employment preparation and local services. An introduction to his local library helped him become an active member of that community, while friendships grew with BASP tenants and Melbourne's Ugandan community.

When Hamed arrived, his housemates prepared breakfast to welcome him. Later, BASP connected him with a local organisation supporting vulnerable patients. Volunteering there has helped him build confidence, develop experience and contribute to his new community.

With his work rights granted, Hamed is now looking for employment and taking further steps towards independence. His story reminds us that safety is only the beginning: connection, opportunity and belonging help people rebuild their lives.



SUPPORTERS MAKE THESE NEW BEGINNINGS POSSIBLE

Every safe home, practical support and new connection is made possible by the generosity of our supporters and community. Thank you for helping people move beyond crisis and begin building brighter futures.

*Names changed to protect privacy.



You're Invited!

BASP's Annual Christmas Party 2026

As another wonderful year comes to a close, we invite the BASP community to come together for our annual Christmas party — an afternoon of good food, friendship and celebration!



Saturday 5th of December 2026



1:00 pm – 3:00 pm



**Brigidine Ministry Centre,
54 Beaconsfield Pde, Albert Park**

Join us for a relaxed lunch as we celebrate a year filled with love, support, unity and solidarity. This is a special opportunity for our BASP community to come together, reconnect, share stories and give thanks for all the people who make our work possible.

We'll provide everything, including food and drinks! All you need to bring is yourself, your family and friends and enjoy the afternoon.

Whether you have been part of BASP for many years or have joined our community more recently, you are warmly welcome. We look forward to celebrating with you and sharing in the joy of the Christmas season.



Let's celebrate the power of community and the difference we make when we stand together in solidarity.

We can't wait to see you there!

With love from the BASP team 



Book your place:



<https://www.trybooking.com/DRAIA>

We are grateful for your support

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

Most food items are appreciated. In particular:

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



At present we need

Vouchers, full cream long-life milk, noodles, tuna, rice, dates, Gladwrap, tinfoil, coffee shopping bags, shampoo, conditioner and body wash, deodorant, toothpaste, and cleaning products including dish washing detergent, laundry detergent and toilet cleaner.

Donations

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 queries@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 if you don't want one.



With Heartfelt Thanks

It is with heartfelt gratitude that we thank you for your continued support of BASP.



Whether you are a volunteer, an advocate, a donor, a school that fundraises, or a sector colleague who stands alongside us in solidarity, you are an important part of our community. It is the collective kindness, commitment and generosity of people like you that make us stronger and enable us to continue the work we do.

The need for support for people seeking asylum remains as important as ever. Your contribution, in whatever form it takes, helps us continue to walk alongside people as they navigate uncertainty, build connections and work towards a safer and more secure future. Please know that your support means so much to us, and to the people whose lives you help us touch.

I am continually humbled by the time, care and generosity you give to BASP. Every act of kindness, every hour volunteered, every donation, every conversation and every show of solidarity makes a difference. Thank you for being part of a community that believes in compassion, dignity and the importance of ensuring that no one has to face these challenges alone.

If you find yourself around Albert Park, please pop in for a chat and a cup of tea. Our door is always open, and I would love the opportunity to see you, catch up and thank you in person.

I hope to see as many of you as possible at our next community discussion and, of course, our Christmas party. It will be a lovely opportunity to come together, reconnect and celebrate the community that makes BASP what it is.

Until then, please accept my heartfelt thanks for standing with us and for continuing to believe in this work.

With gratitude,

Renee Mazloum
Chief Executive Officer
Brigidine Asylum Seekers Project

BASP OFFICE CLOSURE

**Closed 24 December – 4 January
for the holidays.**