

1. Current and topical issues affecting Refugees are circulated to Group members via email. At some of our meetings time has been given to share items of interest and concern.
2. Letters have been sent to the Prime Minister concerning the Government policy of wishing to establish an off-shore processing centre; and to the Minister for Immigration and Citizenship concerning policy regarding Children in Detention.  
There has been no response to either letter.  
An earlier letter to the former Prime Minister concerning the Government's policy on asylum seekers received a reply from the former Minister from Immigration and Citizenship.
3. BRSG was honoured to receive the Rural and Regional Award 2010 in the Humanitarian Awards presented by NSW Service for the Treatment and Rehabilitation of Torture and Trauma Survivors and the Refugee Council of Australia. *(The Award also went to Mr Justice David Tangie.)*
4. A very successful Refugee Photography Exhibition was held at BMEC from 4<sup>th</sup> – 15<sup>th</sup> May, 2010. The exhibition, "Freedom from Fear," celebrated refugees who have found a sense of belonging in NSW and are helping to shape their new communities.  
Accompanying each portrait was a short story about that refugee's journey. On its Bathurst stop, the portrait and story of Eva Matiszik was added. The exhibition was opened by Professor Ian Goulter, Vice Chancellor of Charles Sturt University.
5. Members of the Congolese Community of Australia visited Bathurst on 26<sup>th</sup> June where they gave a presentation in an attempt to raise the awareness of human rights abuses in the Democratic Republic of Congo. This presentation was held as part of Refugee Week and attracted 50 people.
6. The Burundian Leadership Team visited Bathurst from 10<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> September and were hosted by the BRSG. The Group were accommodated at St Josephs Mount and included an external facilitator and Gary Cachia from STARTTS. Members of BRSG mixed with the Burundians over meals and organized a visit to a Dairy at Evans Plains.
7. This year BRSG are planning to host visits, arranged through STARTTS, of a group of African Women in April; a Chaldean Women's Group at the end of July; and a Serbian Women's Elderly Group either October or November.
8. On Saturday 28<sup>th</sup> August 2010 a successful Training Day was conducted by STARTTS with the assistance of two Burundians. The 11 participants were provided with an understanding of what refugees have been through, the impact of these traumatic experiences and some general tips for working with refugee survivors of torture and trauma.
9. Refugee Sunday Ecumenical Service was hosted by the Bathurst Baptist Church. The Guest Preacher was the Rev John Jegasothy, a Tamil Uniting Church Minister from Sydney. His address was outstanding as he drew on his own experience as a refugee fleeing from Sri Lanka with his family. A drama/reading was presented by girls from Mackillop College.

10. BRSG has taken out an 18 month lease from the Trustees of the Sisters of Mercy Diocese of Bathurst from 1<sup>st</sup> February 2011 on the Cottage at 28 Busby Street Bathurst. The Cottage will be used for the support of refugees and asylum seekers, including the hosting of refugee groups from Sydney. The Cottage can also be used for Respite by STARTTS Staff from Sydney.

BRSG has named the Cottage the "Kath Knowles House of Welcome."

11. The Group submitted an application for funding to the Department of Immigration and Citizenship under the Settlement Grants Program 2011 -12. The Project put forward aims to facilitate the resettlement of humanitarian refugees in the Bathurst Region of NSW where they will have the opportunity to become small-scale self-employed organic market gardeners.
12. A letter was sent to the Minister for Immigration and Citizenship, at the 21<sup>st</sup> December 2010, requesting a meeting to explain the Group's ideas and our proposed project. The Minister, in his response dated 1<sup>st</sup> March 2011, stated that an Adviser would be in contact with the Group to discuss our concerns. To date this has not occurred and a further email request has been sent to the Adviser.
13. BRSG received \$550-00 from Bathurst Regional Council under their Section 356 Donation Program in July 2010 towards the cost of hosting visits. A cheque for this amount was presented by the Mayor at a function at the Council. BRSG have again this year submitted an application for funding under this program.
14. Media contacts were maintained both through the local print media and Radio Station 2BS. Articles included information relating to the Photo Exhibition, Visits, Training, Refugee Sunday service, International Volunteers Day, We're here to Help with Radio Interviews on many of these issues. The Group was very appreciative of all the work carried out by Elysha Hickey as Media Officer. We were very sorry when she moved to the Central Coast and wish her all the very best for her future.