

BATHURST REFUGEE SUPPORT GROUP ANNUAL REPORT 2019

1. The Bathurst Refugee Support Group continues to be active across the Bathurst community with many of its members being able to share their experiences in other community groups.
2. Topical issues affecting Refugees and Asylum Seekers, particularly from refugee advocates, continue to be circulated to Group members via email.
3. Letters of concern and Petitions relating to issues affecting Refugees and Asylum Seekers have been sent to Newspapers, Federal Ministers and Members of Parliament.
4. A busload of Hazara Asylum Seekers many with Safe Haven Enterprise Visas (SHEV) visited Bathurst with Lesley Ashwood from Sydney as part of a program of informing such prospective holders about regional centres of possible settlement. Members of BRSBG met with them while they were in Bathurst.
5. Members of BRSBG continue to support and assist the two Hazara young men, Abbas and Zaki, who are living in the Kath Knowles House of Welcome. They are now in their third year of Nursing at Charles Sturt University, and also working at St. Catherine's Nursing Home. They are both doing very well in their studies and have enjoyed Hospital placements, as a part of their training, during this year.
6. Support is being provided to a number of Sri Lankan families who are now living in Bathurst. This support has included helping with the finding of work, providing driving lessons and friendship and assistance with many varied tasks.
7. Driving lessons have been given to Refugees by members of the Group, and one member is continuing to provide lessons on an ongoing basis.
8. Jean Fell, Executive Officer of the Neighbourhood Centre, spoke to the Group on the work of the BINC and its work with migrants – with particular emphasis on the then current government funding situation.
9. Five members of BRSBG attended the Asylum Seekers Resource Centre Workshop in Orange in November 2018. Discussion centred around how to present “the case for refugees and asylum seekers to those neutral or hostile, in some way, to Australia's acceptance of those seeking asylum.
10. BRSBG worked with Jock Cheetham on the Bathurst Multi Cultural Storytelling Festival, with members of the Group and Refugees telling their story as they participated in one of the Festival Events.
11. BRSBG members attended the film “Island of the Hungry Ghosts” on 7th April at the Bathurst Cinema Complex.
12. BRSBG will be arranging a Public Event in 2020 with a Guest Speaker of note to help bring more awareness about refugee issues to the notice of the community.
13. BRSBG received a Section 356 Grant from the Bathurst Regional Council of \$2,000-00. This funding was given to assist with the cost of refugee hosting, resettlement program and awareness raising.
14. The Combined Christian Churches Service was held on Sunday 16th June, and was hosted by Holy Trinity Anglican Parish at Kelso. The guest Speaker, Sarah, spoke about her Middle East experiences as an English teacher to refugees from the war torn countries of North Africa, Syria and Lebanon. The collection offering from this service will go towards the two Hazara refugees living in Bathurst.

15. The Bathurst Refugee Support Group continues to maintain the Kath Knowles House of Welcome as a place of respite for refugees and their carers. BRSO is in conversation with the Sisters of Mercy over the urgent need to renew and extend the current lease which ends as at 31st December 2019.
16. A very successful Christmas Party was held in December at Pauline Sutton's home. Also at this Party we celebrated Abbas' birthday.
17. BRSO arranged a party in March at the House of Welcome for Zaki's birthday.
18. A social gathering was held in July at Sister Bernie's home where members and refugees could meet and socialise in a time of friendship and relaxation. This was a very successful event.
19. A very successful fundraising BBQ was held at Bunnings, with another such BBQ planned to be held in 2020.
20. BRSO has been very pleased to receive donations from:
 - Bathurst Baptist Church \$500-00
 - Reliance Credit Union \$500-00
21. Anonymous donations totalling \$2,200-00 were received and went towards the purchase of textbooks and car service for the Hazara refugees.
22. The Bathurst Refugee Support Group provided the following donations during the past year:
 - Donation of \$500-00 to the Asylum Seekers Centre.
 - Donation of \$500-00 to the Refugee Council of Australia
 - Donation of \$500-00 to the Asylum Seeker Resource Centre
 - An amount of \$2,350-00 towards costs for a Sri Lankan young woman's dental treatment.
 - An amount of \$2,200-00 towards a Sri Lankan refugee's legal costs.
 - An amount of \$1,030-70 towards forklift courses, cleaning equipment and car service for refugees.
23. A number of No Interest Loans have been provided to Refugees to assist them with their ongoing costs.
24. The Group continues to receive generous support from individuals and organisations, both financially and materially.
25. Media contacts have continued to be maintained through local print media, the Western Advocate and Bathurst City Life, and Radio 2BS, 2MCE FM and Central West ABC.