

## STRENGTH AND KINDNESS

### Brigidine Asylum Seekers Project (BASP)



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

**Newsletter 65 August 2013**

The Project aims to:

- \* provide hospitality and practical support for asylum seekers
- \* 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

For two decades now, the Australian Government has acted towards asylum seekers in a way that is morally reprehensible. Except for a few dissenting voices among politicians there has seemed to be no room for compassionate human behaviour. This has taken on new dimensions of cruelty over the past few weeks. Now we see policies being explained, not in any humanitarian terms, but primarily as a matter of border protection. It appears to be about providing refuge for us who already live here. The issue of boat arrivals has been framed as a law and order matter and not a moral issue. Those who risk their lives and the lives of their children trying to get to safety on boats are not the enemy. Yet the political rhetoric and actions have put Australia on a war footing against invasion. That we could be in any danger from people who come in boats that are never more than barely seaworthy beggars belief. Both major political parties have aided and abetted this construction of the issue. Now those arriving on boats are not people seeking asylum, they are aliens. Or another spin is that they are simply here to earn more money than they can in their own country.

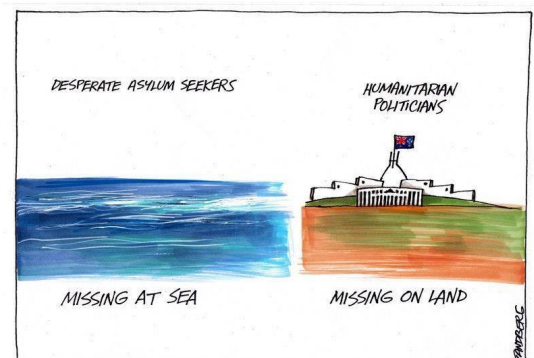
It is hard not to be cynical and despairing about the direction Australian political leaders are taking the country in terms of our moral responsibility to those seeking protection. Politicians are meant to lead – they are meant to help a country evolve its moral standards. They are meant to listen to the people but also be prepared to stand up and fight for what is right, rather than what is wrong just because it is populist. Maybe it has always been so. One of this country's very first laws as a Commonwealth was the Immigration Restriction Act 1901, which introduced the dictation test for prospective entrants. Throughout our history, tight control of immigration has always been a vote-winner. But does it need to be?

Petro Georgiou who retired after many years in the Federal Parliament said in his final speech:

*I believed that politics was a tough business. There were two dominant parties, they were in conflict, they had power and they had resources. They were strong and evenly matched. They punched and they counterpunched, and sometimes low blows were landed. In my view, however, scapegoating the vulnerable was never part of the political game. I still believe this.*

We believe that no decent country, affluent and able, would outsource its obligations and effectively bribe poor nations to look after those coming to its shores.

**The question appears to be: what are political leaders NOT prepared to do in the interests of political gain?**



## Will the Papua New Guinea 'solution' work?

Reinstalled Australian Prime Minister Kevin Rudd recently announced his Papua New Guinea or "PNG Solution". No asylum seeker coming by boat would ever obtain permanent resettlement in Australia, even if they were subsequently found to be a genuine refugee.

There seems little doubt that this is designed to win votes in the handful of marginal seats that may decide the outcome of the election. Rudd is attempting to break the people smuggling business model by removing the possibility that one can arrive by boat seeking asylum and eventually win resettlement in Australia. Despite the deliberately harsh rhetoric about the PNG Solution that is designed to deter boat arrivals, many believe that Rudd's plan will not be as effective as might first appear.

The plan violates Article 31 of the Refugee Convention by penalizing asylum seekers on account of their mode of entry to Australia. It is also illegal for Australia to detain people they have no intention of ever processing. It will fail to meet basic International Standards required in a Refugee Determination Process (the UN has found PNG lacks the capacity & expertise to assess refugee claims). Australia itself accepts asylum seekers from PNG on Refugee convention grounds e.g., homosexuality is illegal in PNG and yet Australia would be sending gay asylum seekers there. Rape and sexual violence rates are astronomical in PNG and the death penalty exists.

With such basic problems challenges are likely in Australian courts.

There are serious doubts that PNG has the capacity to absorb the number of asylum seekers that will try to make it to Australia, even if there is an initial deterrent effect. Current facilities can only house around 300 people. Given that around 3,500 asylum seekers have been arriving each month since the beginning of 2013, even a dramatic slowdown would overburden the Manus Island facilities.

The Attorney General acknowledges that Australia bears responsibility for the asylum seekers who arrive here at all stages. So where would surplus asylum seekers be sent for processing if PNG facilities could no longer cope, as is likely to be the case. Due to a 2011 High Court decision which invalidated the "Malaysia Solution" proposed by previous Labor leader Julia Gillard, our country cannot legally send Australia-bound asylum seekers to countries that are not signatories to the 1951 Geneva Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees and the 1967 Protocol. As PNG and the Philippines are the only signatories among Australia's neighbours, the suspicion is that Australia-bound boat people who cannot be processed by PNG will have to be processed under Australian jurisdiction and resettled in Australia if they are found to be refugees.

The PNG Solution is subject to renewal each year, meaning that there will be immense annual pressure in PNG to refuse to renew what seems to be an extremely unpopular agreement locally. The cost of the implementation of this solution must be astronomical. It seems unlikely that Australians will agree to the kind of impost this will be for too long.

Dr John Lee of Sydney University believes that:

*... we need to remember that this policy is forged in the midst of an election campaign. Rudd only needs the PNG Solution to "stop the boats" for a few weeks in order to somewhat cynically portray the initiative as an ingenious plan. Short term success in stemming boat arrivals is all Rudd needs, which is just as well -- because this is all the PNG Solution is likely to achieve.*

(Sydney Morning Herald July 22)



A refugee pictured on the Department of Immigration and Citizenship website with the caption "a female asylum seeker comes to terms with the fact she won't be settled in Australia".



**NEXT DISCUSSION NIGHT**  
**Wednesday 21<sup>st</sup> August, 7:30pm**  
**Drama Room, Albert Park College, 83 Danks St Albert Park**

**Our Focus: a panel and Q&A on asylum seeker policies.**  
**Our Guests: Candidates for the federal seat of Melbourne Ports**  
**Chaired By: Frank O'Connor, former Mayor of Port Phillip**

**Note date Wednesday next, 21st August and new venue:  
Albert Park College 83 Danks street, Albert Park**

**Our focus:**  
**Panel and Q & A on**  
**Asylum Seeker Policies**

**Our special guests:**  
**Candidates for the Federal seat**  
**of 'Melbourne Ports'**

**Michael Danby**, Parliamentary Secretary for the Arts &  
Member for Melbourne Ports

**Kevin Ekendahl**, Liberal Party candidate

**Ann Birrell**, Greens candidate

Chair: **Frank O'Connor**, former Mayor of Port Phillip

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

## **It's a harsh world when you are trying to survive on about \$30 a day—but this gets tempered by a lot of community compassion**

Under the 'no-advantage' ruling, families are being released into the community on Bridging Visas with no work rights and with an income of 89% of Newstart (about \$200 a week). The Department of Immigration have contracted the Red Cross and AMES to oversee the transition of thousands of families from detention centres into a transitional place for four to six weeks (where they pay \$210 a week) and then into private rental. The family has to borrow the money for the bond and the first four weeks rent and repay it over the next few months. The problems for the families are immense. Housing at affordable rates if you are living on about \$30 a day is almost impossible to find. Setting up a house with no money is also impossible. As people on the lowest of incomes, these families have no concessions for utilities or medicine. Rents even in outer Melbourne are tipping \$1200 a month, so this meant families spend the first six months living on next to

nothing. It seems that an impression is being given by the Department that families are being adequately catered for. BASP would strongly argue that under no definition of 'adequately' is this true.



A lot of housing is very basic

Small community groups (BASP included) have been trying to help many of these families. We wonder what is happening to those who have no community support because no one has 'found' them. Often when families get to their new house, the electricity has not been connected, they have little understanding of where they are and they don't even have pots, pans, beds, crockery and no furniture. We

have met families who spent the first nights in their new house in the dark, on the floor with only one blanket between them.

The families are responsible for getting themselves to the houses. They are expected to do this via public transport taking their few possessions in plastic bags and journey on buses and trains to an unknown destination. One family took a taxi from Maidstone to Dandenong in desperation. This left them with \$30 for two weeks. Another family got lost in Werribee with a fish and chip shop owner trying to help.

A young lawyer with his pregnant wife and child showed us the house they had found and accepted. The windows were filthy with dirty, sticky tape covering the gaps. They felt lucky that they had something before they were forced out of the transitional housing. With his excellent English this young man is luckier than most but as we left, he said that he was going to a local mission where he had heard he might be given some food vouchers. AMES and Red Cross are now providing beds, mattresses and a fridge but again not everyone gets these and some are waiting for weeks.



Poor rentals are still very expensive

**The good news part of all this is that so many people in the community have shown extraordinary kindness and support to many of these new families.** One family who had two mugs, a couple of plates, three spoons and virtually nothing else when we first visited them, welcomed us a few days later as they were proudly and gratefully drinking out of a teaset that had been given to us and with new saucepans, cutlery and a comfortable sofa delivered to them by a family who had offered to deliver these things to a family in need.





There has actually been an outpouring of assistance from many in the community. Help has been given in the following ways:

- 20 new TV's were donated for families by a compassionate donor
- Blankets, doonas and other bedding have been supplied by many in the community
- Furniture has been given and delivered
- Families have been visited and welcomed
- Individuals have helped children get into school
- Firms have offered discounts for school uniforms and basic necessities when told who the things were for
- Groceries and food vouchers have been given to us for families

We wish all who help could be present when newly arrived families say how kind Australian people are.

### **"Go and die somewhere else".**

We do not deny that all people with an ounce of kindness are worried about people drowning en route to Australia but instead of addressing this we are simply consigning people fleeing to die another way—trying to get to another place—in their search for safety.

Bill Maley (Canberra Times July 27) maintains that a triumphant success for the Rudd policy approach of sending all boat arrivals offshore will simply give a boost to the smuggling activities of the Russian and central Asian mafias. Those fleeing the Taliban will still die, but they will die by drowning in the Mediterranean, or by suffocating in overcrowded trucks. The real message of the new Australian approach is a simple one: "Go and die somewhere else".

**Coupled with the argument that we care too much to let people die while trying to get to Australia is the idea that these people should let 'deserving' refugees come from places in overseas camps.** This is a spurious argument because successive Australian governments have chosen, as a matter of deliberate policy, to cut one resettlement place for each protection visa issued to an asylum seeker arriving in Australia who establishes a credible refugee claim. This is a decision that could easily be changed and the two programs for refugee intake decoupled. This would mean a system in which a fixed number of resettlement places would be guaranteed each year irrespective of the number of successful asylum claimants processed onshore.

Politicians also run the line that "good" refugees are those who patiently join queues overseas, while "bad" refugees are those who act on their own. This claim, too, has little merit. There are several reasons why this is the case. First, while they undoubtedly help some deserving people, offshore resettlement programs do not offer a place in a queue but a ticket in a lottery. Despite the best efforts of the office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, there is very little that is "orderly" about offshore resettlement programs, and no guarantee that they in fact assist the neediest refugees. All too often they exclude the disabled, favour those with sponsors in the country of resettlement, and are distorted by political considerations.



## **Why it is unfair and wrong to generalise about asylum seeker claims (with particular reference to Iranians)**

In a breathtaking statement the Foreign Minister of Australia, Senator Bob Carr said recently "Boat people are not people fleeing persecution ... they are coming here as economic migrants.... We have reached the view that as a result of court and tribunal decisions it's coming up wrong. We need a tougher more hard-edged assessment on asylum seekers... They are not people fleeing persecution. They are coming from majority religious or ethnic groups in the countries they're fleeing, they are coming here as economic migrants."

The irony is that since August 2012 Australia has not been processing applications. Bob Carr says these same people are economic migrants. Who says? If they have not had their cases assessed we don't know. Indeed, the Foreign Minister's assertions that maritime asylum seekers are all "economic migrants" - and that Australia is lenient in its processing of refugee claims - are inflammatory remarks that have no basis in fact.

While Australia is experiencing a surge in irregular migrants seeking protection as refugees, so are many countries around the world: this is a global trend. It is not surprising that so many are found to be refugees - people who have a "well-founded fear" of being persecuted for one of the five Refugee Convention reasons: race, religion, nationality, membership of a social group or political opinion. The simple truth is that using people smugglers to reach Australia by boat is dangerous and difficult. It is not an option taken lightly or for no good reason.

We would like the Senator to meet those who have arrived by boat. Mr Carr singled out Iranians as most likely to have come only to get a better life. By inference these people have nothing to fear if they stayed in Iran. Those of us involved in the Brigidine Asylum Seekers Project know many Iranians who are asking for asylum. Hanid is a young man with such a sensitive approach to others and to human rights issues. Ali is a passionate advocate for others and with a driving ambition to do a job that will help people in this community. Fatima has a huge reserve of courage and determination to look after her young son and provide for him. Majed has been through all sorts of trials but is ready to take any job to be independent in spite of the physical difficulties in doing this.

One of the things that bedevils the situation for many asylum seekers is that generalisations are made about the circumstances they come from. While it is undoubtedly important for decision makers to take information about the countries of origin of asylum seekers and refugees, every person has a proximate and unique story. Having read many many decisions and reviews of decisions, it is amazing to us that better questions are often not pursued by interviewers to get the truth of the circumstances that leads an individual to take the drastic steps of seeking protection in a new place.

A corollary of this disregard for considering differences among asylum seekers is Senator Carr's staggering claim that **all** Iranians are economic migrants. This assumes that all have the same reasons for seeking asylum, namely to get a better income and living conditions. The majority of people in most countries in the world want this but most don't leave their own country and put themselves at the mercy of rejection by another country to achieve it.

This has become an issue in Australia because of the 15,182 asylum-seekers who have arrived by boat in

Australia this year, 5054 have come from Iran -- a marked increase on the 2749 Iranians who came in the full 2012 calendar year. It is important to note that most Iranians who seek protection do so in Turkey – just over their border.

A whole variety of reasons are causing Iranians to flee their country.

While we as part of the Brigidine Asylum Seekers Project do not claim in any way to be experts about the situation in Iran we have met and had close association with a lot of people from Iran – both inside and outside detention centres. There are many and varied reasons why those we have come to know have sought protection in Australia. We have known people where each of the below were pertinent.

- Conversion from Islam to another religion is seen as apostasy and this is a crime that can result in a death sentence.
- Protesting against the Iran's supreme leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, is a crime and if convicted a person can face death or torture or long term imprisonment.
- attending a pro-democracy rally is a crime and there are a veritable army of state employees going through video clips and other evidence to identify individual protesters.
- the basiji are a paramilitary force who inform on and threaten people who do anything against very repressive rules e.g. wearing a shirt with sleeves that are too short, having music playing too loudly, sitting with a person of the opposite sex in public; again the outcomes of conviction are dire.
- journalists and bloggers are imprisoned and silenced at rates higher than any other country.
- there is persistent and pervasive assault on women's rights;
- religious and ethnic minorities, particularly the Baha'i and the Kurds are targeted;
- the fundamental freedoms of speech have been criminalised as have association and assembly.
- opposition leaders, human rights defenders, and the lawyers who would defend them re imprisoned
- Kurdish people
- people disappear into Tehran's notorious Evin prison, families are terrified when a son or daughter defy the regime and question the religious society.
- Members of the Green Movement (a non-violent human rights movement) still remain in jail after a large protest in 2009, along with dozens of journalists, human rights activists and members of the Baha'i faith.
- Homosexuals suffer horrific punishment
- Mandaеens (an ancient and peaceful religious group) in the western province of Khuzestan have faced severe discrimination for following the faith Sabian Mandaеism which is not officially acknowledged in the Islamic republic.
- A small Arabic population in the Ahwaz province are the subject of on-going persecution
- US economic sanctions continue to cripple much of Iran's economy
- There is the highest per capita rate of executions in the world;

So the list of targets of the regime is long and include women, religious and ethnic minorities, lawyers, trade unionists and human rights supporters, and its tools of repression include rape, murder, torture, execution, arbitrary arrest and unlawful detention. Iran has persistently been the subject of criticism even by the United Nations.

All of this makes for a weak case for portraying all Iranian asylum seekers as purely as economic migrants. The same kind of caveat applies to asylum seekers from other places.



### **Ali Ahmad Jafari, 20<sup>th</sup> February 1987 - 20<sup>th</sup> June 2013**

Twenty six year old young people should not die in Australia after a heart attack when they are in detention centres. But on Thursday 20<sup>th</sup> June 2013, Ahmad Ali died in the Villawood Immigration Detention Centre after spending thirty seven months there.

Ali has a good friend in Geelong (another young man in Ali's situation except he is not in detention) and this man often rang me to ask if we could do anything to help get his friend out of detention.

I spoke to Ali the day before he died. He was upset because he said his 'lawyer' had told him he had no option but to go back to Afghanistan. I assured him that was not true and I would ring the lawyer. I did so and had a very unsympathetic response. I did not have the heart to ring Ali back and tell him that he was right—the lawyer was saying that since she believed in not deluding people she

had told him he would have to return to Afghanistan.

In 2009 Ali had been deported from England to Afghanistan where he had no remaining family links. He immediately fled to Quetta in Pakistan to be with the remnants of his family, but the situation was even more dangerous than when he had left for Europe as a teenager in 2005. So he made his way to Christmas Island. He was deemed not to be a genuine refugee in May 2010. Ali was one of those Hazaras who have been and continue to be in limbo. We do not know the number of those who are in this group but our estimate is that there may be one hundred across Australia. We are concerned that these men have not had natural justice accorded to them. They are a group of asylum seekers who have not had the opportunity to fully present their cases in ways that other asylum seekers have had, for the following reasons.

An assessment by the Australian embassy in Kabul, dated 21 February 2010, said that many ethnic Hazaras in Afghanistan were fleeing the country as economic migrants, not genuine refugees, and that they were living in a "golden age". At the time, the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) advice was widely criticised by many who were working with Hazara asylum seekers. However this document became one of the "key sources" used to reject Afghan asylum claims.

From April till October 2010 the processing of Afghan asylum-seekers was suspended for six months. Chris Evans, Immigration Minister at the time, said that the situation for Hazaras had significantly improved. He said "the Taliban's fall, durable security in parts of the country, and constitutional and legal reform to protect minorities' rights have improved the circumstances of Afghanistan's minorities, including Afghan Hazaras".

At the time, Professor William Maley, an Australian National University academic and international expert on the politics of modern Afghanistan, told the Australian: "If anything, the consensus among experts on Afghanistan is that the security environment has been deteriorating." During this time the Hazaras whose applications were on hold were being held in detention. Often these were in very remote centres such as Curtin. At this time there was no guarantee that the processing of Hazara claims would be renewed.

After the resumption of processing, the DFAT assessment continued to be used to determine whether hundreds of Afghan asylum-seekers, mainly Hazaras, should be given a visa to stay or be ordered home. At this stage there was a large backlog of cases to be processed and the proportion of Afghans who had their claims for refugee status accepted fell from 95 per cent at the start of the 2010 to about 30 per cent later in 2010. This is in spite of the fact that there was no evidence that the underlying factors (both ethnic and sectarian) fuelling



hostility towards Hazaras had dissipated.

Ali had been granted community detention in February 2012. A few months later he was brought back into detention at Villawood because the Department claimed to have found that he had a criminal conviction in the UK. This proved to be a case of mistaken identity; as his friend Graeme Swincer pointed out “Ahmad Ali Jafari” is the Hazara equivalent of “Bill Smith” in Afghanistan. Eventually he obtained a police certificate from the UK, dated 9<sup>th</sup> May 2013, indicating that there was no trace of any convictions, reprimands, warnings, cautions or impending prosecutions for him there. However Ali continued to be kept in immigration detention.

As a result of Taliban harassment and the fact that his father “disappeared” in 1997, his mother and her five young children fled to Pakistan . However, there was no safety for Hazaras in Quetta (particularly for the young) so Ali fled again, this time to England.

The following is a tribute to Ali from Graeme Swincer who works tirelessly for asylum seekers in a group called the Blue Mountains Refugee Support Group. Graeme knew Ali well from many visits to him in Villawood.

[Brigid]

Ali lived in Gloucester and linked with the “Gloucestershire Action for Refugees and Asylum Seekers”. This group wrote about him: *“He was very polite and conscientious, and had worked hard to improve his situation whilst living here. He had been incredibly committed to his school work, and given that he arrived without any English, it was amazing that he had been able to achieve so much in the time he was here. We had personally witnessed his commitment to education as he had attended extra tuition using GARAS premises. He was very active within the community, going on residential weekends away with us and other deprived young people from our area, being well liked and respected by his peers as well. His honesty and integrity is impeccable as well as his manners, leaving us no doubt as to his character. It was always a pleasure to see him. Given his undoubted skills and ability he will definitely prove to be an exceptional and valuable member of any society that he settles down in.”* I could not have said it better. He impressed all who knew him as a man of quiet dignity and serenity, gentle, respectful, and obviously popular with both fellow detainees and visiting friends. He was a natural and gifted leader. He bore the rigours of immigration detention with great patience and discipline. He continued to act with seeming fortitude in spite of the constant sense of uncertainty about his future and the pressures of having to clear his name. My wife and I counted him as a valued friend.

But in the end the constant pressure and tension caught up with him. It could have been so different. We do not know if a more prompt response to the symptoms of heart attack could have saved him. Ahmad was strong. But many others facing similar despair and similar treatment are self-harming, contemplating suicide and suffering irreparable psychological damage. I visit them often and talk to them every day. My heart is bleeding and my anger growing by the day as I am confronted by the web of dishonesty and cruelty that is being implemented by my national leaders - all in the interests of politics.



We certainly hope that this tragic experience will result in some soul searching on the part of the faceless people who manage the impersonal, unprofessional and inhumane system that treats innocent people such as Ahmad so badly in the name of “border protection”. There are thousand like him who are being mistreated by our government (supported by a misinformed electorate) for the misguided and ineffective purpose of deterrence. In a context of supposed acceptance of humanitarian principles, how can it ever be acceptable to punish innocent people for any agenda at all?

Ahmad our friend, brother, son, we grieve for you and we will miss you. We pray that your life and death are not in vain.

## Good News



A day designed to fundraise and raise awareness about asylum seekers is being held on

**September 8, 2013 12pm-4pm**

**At 153 Mt Macedon Rd, Mt Macedon**

*Donations will be collected at the gate and spin the wheel raffle tickets sold on the day for some goodies to be won! Please Bring: Blanket/chair, wine and nibbles*

*Food Provided: Sausages and Rolls*

*Parking: Road parking available/ car-pooling a bonus!*

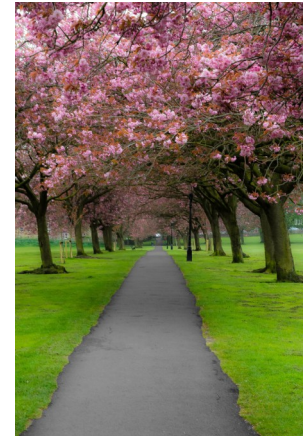
*Kids: Jumping castle, face paint and fairy garden.*

*Music generously provided by:*

*Tania Ravbar*

*Meeks and Marty*

*Tom Dickens and Thom and James Devery*



**A Day on the Farm  
in support of the  
Brigidine Asylum  
Seeker Project**

**RSVP BY AUGUST 25**

To Gemma or Bridget @

[Newbeginnings451@yahoo.com.au](mailto:Newbeginnings451@yahoo.com.au)



The Pope used a visit to the tiny island of Lampedusa to highlight the plight

of migrants and asylum seekers who die trying to reach Europe. In perhaps the sternest homily of his papacy so far, Pope Francis has inveighed against "the globalisation of indifference". Lampedusa is the point of entry into Europe for tens of thousands of migrants and asylum seekers, Francis said: "We have become used to the suffering of others. It doesn't affect us. It doesn't interest us. It's not our business." The pope said he had chosen to visit Lampedusa on his first journey out of the Vatican after learning of a recent incident in which migrants had died at sea while attempting to cross from North Africa. The thought of their suffering had come back to him repeatedly like "a thorn in the heart", he said.



A family brought these toys for this little 'asylum seeker' (how can we use the word to describe him? They had a great time playing with him.

Baby Abul Fazul and his mother Fatima currently live with the Brigidines in Albert Park so Abul Fazul has lots of grandmothers! With a bit of luck we won't ruin him with over-attention.

A Sudanese man who had qualifications as a lawyer lived in one of our places of accommodation some years ago. He then moved into the community and borrowed money from the Project to bring out his family. Then he found that he could not get stable employment in Australia—certainly nothing as a lawyer. He left and went to a Middle eastern country.

A short time ago he returned to Australia for a week or so to manage a work commitment. He came to renew acquaintance and he paid back the money he owed the Project. The money is certainly a help but the honesty of the man was an even bigger thing for us.



The Catholic parish at Holy Eucharist, East Malvern has provided this house for two asylum seeker families. The house which used to be a presbytery, has been easily divided into two, with a shared kitchen and laundry.

Phillipa Smyth and her partner Salim Shamsuddin have been doing a fantastic job keeping our website up to date. Why don't you check out [www.basp.org.au](http://www.basp.org.au)?

Phillipa and Salim have also done a mammoth job in picking up and delivering furniture to families who are moving into empty places.

Stephen Brasier keeps our facebook page alive. Just look up Brigidine Asylum Seekers Project and you will find all sorts of news and links.

Thanks so much Phillipa, Salim and Stephen.

One of the families has a fifteen year old son who is totally focussed on getting to school and being educated. He has started at Salesian College in Chadstone. Salesian, as with all other schools we have had any connection with in terms of enrolment, has been absolutely supportive and generous in helping with books, a computer, uniforms and even a six months Myki card. In years to come these are the memories that families will tell about their welcome to Australia.

On a sadder note Rona, the elderly mother of the other family in the house, died within a couple of weeks of moving into the community. Our sympathy is extended to Rona's two daughters.



[basp.org.au](http://basp.org.au)  
[facebook.com/BrigidineAsylumSeekersProject](https://facebook.com/BrigidineAsylumSeekersProject)






Asylum seekers leaving detention often having nothing.  
 We need quality items: furniture, beds, white goods, pots, saucepans, cutlery,  
 non-perishable foods, blankets, clothes, toiletries, prams, disposable nappies.  
 We also need help transporting large items.

Often individuals in detention want to see a visitor to get some comfort or some help. However, as often as not they want to see you to ask for help for someone else. Recently a man indefinitely detained because he has been rejected by ASIO, was determined to speak to Brigid. He wanted help for a mother and her daughter because she has no-one to share a house when she gets released. An amazing man with a heart of gold! After four years of detention—and no end in sight to his own misery, he is begging for help for someone else.



## How you can help ...

### Advocacy

Write to your local member of Parliament (or call in and see them) and ask for a more humane approach to asylum seekers

### Food that is very welcome

Eggs, sugar, rice, flour, salt, two minute noodles, cooking oil, tea and coffee, long life milk, tuna, canned tomatoes, canned fruit, spaghetti or other pasta, chick peas, canned beans

### Other goods always in demand

Cleaning materials and dishwashing detergents, toilet paper

### Something Special

A voucher for Coles, Big W, Kmart or similar stores allows asylum seekers the independence to buy something they really want and need.

### Employment

We are very keen to hear from anyone who has a job opportunity for asylum seekers.

Contact: (03) 9696 2107 or [bssc@cyberspace.net.au](mailto:bssc@cyberspace.net.au)

### Donations

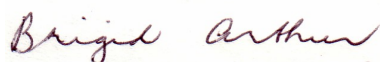
Donations can be made by cheque to Brigidine Asylum Seekers Project, 52 Beaconsfield Pde, Albert Park or directly to **Brigidine Asylum Seekers Trust Account: bsb: 083-004; a/c: 56-924-6603**

**A Forum on our treatment of Asylum Seekers and Refugees is being held at 6.30 pm on Monday 26th August at the Kaleide Theatre, RMIT in Swanston St. Speakers include Julian Burnside QC, Professor Bill Maley, Bishop Phillip Huggins and Dr Leanne Weber. This should be a great night.**

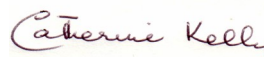
## THANK YOU!

Thanks you all so much for your generous contributions. We have had an amazing response to a call for furniture and household goods. Many people are less cold and desperate because people like you have helped them.

One of our ongoing needs that is getting more desperate is to assist individuals with family reunion applications. The cost of this has risen dramatically since a policy change involving the phasing out of Humanitarian visas. Refugees trying to sponsor their wives and families faced a huge and unprecedented increase in fees in July 2013 and now DIAC are raising the application fees again in September. A family who paid \$2680 for a DIAC application pre July 1st now face a bill of \$5500 plus. DIAC now charge for every person included in the application. Most family reunions include several children. We have been able to assist a number of people with these applications because of donations. A group called Sanctuary have also helped a number of families.



Brigid Arthur



Catherine Kelly

