

STRENGTH AND KINDNESS

Brigidine Asylum Seekers Project (BASP)

54 Beaconsfield Pde, Albert Park 3206
Ph: 96962107; bssc@cyberspace.net.au



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

Newsletter 74 March 2015

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

Our newsletter this time has a significant difference. Catherine is not here to add insights, proof read and remind us of things to include.

Catherine died peacefully on Thursday 12th March. She had been diagnosed with terminal cancer only 4 weeks previously.

Catherine has been described in one of the many tributes paid to her as 'an intelligent, kind and principled woman'.

A tribute from the Asylum Seekers Resource Centre was:

*Sister Catherine Kelly passed away
this week.*

*As part of the Brigidine Asylum
Seekers Project, Sister Catherine for
the past 14 years would house &
support asylum seeker men just
released from detention.*

*No ask was too great, Catherine would
always find a way to help when
everyone else had closed their doors. A
woman of great compassion, courage
& strength....*

*Humble, smart, fearless & love in
motion.*

Catherine was born in Tullow, Co. Carlow in Ireland in 1936. She was the third of five children of Kathleen Greene and James Kelly. She was eight years old when her mother died and not long after she came to Australia to join the Brigidine Sisters, her father died. She remained very



close to her family who now live in many different parts of the world. It was very comforting to her that two of her nieces came to be with her in the week before she died. They are from Sweden.

In 2001, Catherine became one of the coordinators of BASP and she devoted most of her time since then to working with people coming to Australia seeking protection. She will be sorely missed by many but in particular by the asylum seekers she

has supported.

All of those associated with BASP are saddened by Catherine's death and at the same time we celebrate her wonderful contribution to the work of justice and compassion.

We are including a card with our own BASP tribute to Catherine. We ask you to accept this as our thanks for your words of support and sympathy which we have received over the past weeks.

Catherine would have said "Was that all for me?!"



What is happening on Nauru and Manus Island? Why are these offshore detention centres totally untenable?

Numbers: There are 802 people, including 119 children in detention on Nauru. To date, 568 claims for protection from people sent to Nauru have been assessed and 485 of these claims were given a positive judgment. These people were released on to the island as refugees. Both groups of people—inside the detention centre and outside in the Nauru community are having a really hard time.

Area: If we compare greater Melbourne and Nauru, the total area of Nauru is 21 square kilometres (Melbourne is 10,000 square km—about 500 times bigger than the whole Nauru island), we realise we are talking about a very small area. The total population of Nauru is less than 10,000 and Melbourne is over 4 million.

Life for refugees on Nauru: The Government of Nauru will only provide refugees with temporary settlement for five years, so there is a question about what happens to these people then. In the meantime the living conditions for these refugees are awful. There is little indigenous economy – the unemployment rate is about 90 per cent – and the country is almost wholly dependent on Australian aid for its survival. The amount of money given to each resettled refugee is not enough to live on and, if they manage to get a job, they are often attacked by the local people because they are seen as taking jobs from the permanent residents.

Breaches of responsibility: It is important to remember that most constitutional lawyers say that the Australian Government has a non-delegable duty of care towards asylum seekers and this is being breached daily. So there will be many challenges in the courts about the constitutionality of what Australia is doing.

Cambodia as a place of resettlement: The Australian Government is currently proposing to settle refugees processed by Nauru in Cambodia. It is said that four people have volunteered after the Australian Government has reportedly offered each person on Nauru \$15,000 to go to Cambodia. It is generally accepted that under the rule of the politically repressive Hun Sen for the last thirty years, Cambodia urgently needs reforms so that its own people can finally exercise their basic human rights without fear of arrest, torture, and execution. This is hardly a place that people who have fled from other places of persecution should have to choose to resettle.



Manus Island: There are 1023 men locked up on Manus Island. The conditions there are also atrocious. There are regular reports of suicide attempts, self-harm, hunger strikes and extreme ill health.

Lack of independent scrutiny: If conditions were alright in Nauru and Manus Island, the Government would not be making it impossible for any kind of scrutiny. The country charges \$8,000 for a single media visa and regularly Members of Parliament are precluded from gaining entrance to either place. Under the bi-lateral arrangements neither PNG nor Nauru immigration authorities (stacked with Ausaid Advisors) can grant visas to Australian lawyers or Australian media teams who want to travel to Manus and speak to the Refugees and highlight their present suffering.

We have met and talked to many of the people who have spent time on Nauru and Manus Island and are currently in Australia for medical reasons. They are deeply traumatised by the experience. They are desperate about the prospects of being returned. .

The cost of running these two centres is \$1.2 billion per year.

Brigidine Asylum Seekers Project

Discussion Night 2 - 2015

Thursday, May 28th 2015

Detention of asylum seekers: not a trivial pursuit

Even though the numbers of asylum seekers who are the responsibility of Australia are lower, the conditions are worse.

An update by Brigid Arthur

Opportunity for questions and discussion

We will give an update on the various ways BASP is helping asylum seekers and also explore the needs and what further assistance is needed, particularly by asylum seekers in the community.

Time: 7.30 – 9.30p.m

Venue:

St Joseph's Hall

(beside the bluestone church)

274 Rouse St , Port Melbourne



Brigidine Asylum Seekers Project

Contact: 03 9696 2107

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



Babies as pawns in a cruel game

On December 5th last year a controversial bill that introduced new Temporary Protection Visas and gave the government sweeping new maritime powers became law.

The sweetener that was used by the Minister for Immigration, Scott Morrison, to get the cross bench members of the Senate to vote for the Bill allowing it to pass, was that just over 100

children who were in immigration detention on Christmas Island would be released.

The babies pictured above are the ‘post 5th December’ babies. They were born too late to be included in the Morrison Deal and they remain in detention—born in Australia to mothers flown to Australia to give birth and destined to be sent back to Nauru. Some have been in the Melbourne Immigration Detention Centre for a while because their families were seen to be those leading a protest in Darwin a short while ago. The peaceful action was to stop one family with their baby Edwin being returned to Nauru. They succeeded—at least short term!

Vietnamese are a large contingent of those seeking protection in Australia—and many never get here

It has become quite fashionable for people to go for a holiday from Australia to Vietnam and it surprises many that there is quite a contingent of Vietnamese in immigration detention in Australia.

In December last year the High Court determined that people could have their claims assessed at sea. Recently a group of 48 Vietnamese were seemingly kept on board a ship for some weeks, interviewed on the ship and then returned to Vietnam where they were interrogated at a police-run detention centre in a coastal province north of Ho Chi Minh City.

There is no way the rights of these people seeking protection could have been maintained under these circumstances. It is very worrying that there is a spike in the number of Vietnamese coming to Australia with claims against the Communist regime in Vietnam. Amnesty International has reported that Vietnam continues to impose ‘severe restrictions on freedom of expression, association and assembly’ on its citizens and that ‘repression of government critics and activists has worsened’. It also noted that ‘ethnic and religious minority groups perceived to oppose the government remained at risk of harassment, arrest and imprisonment’ in Vietnam.

These examples of turn back operations being engaged in by Australian Immigration are very concerning. The Refugee Council of Australia has said “We do not know where these asylum seekers were intercepted, whether they were detained while on board the HMAS Choules (and, if so, for how long), how were their claims for refugee status were assessed, whether they had access to independent legal advice or whether any guarantees were obtained from the Vietnamese Government that the asylum seekers would not be harmed upon return.

It is likely that Australia has violated multiple international treaties. It is also likely that the lives and safety of asylum seekers are now in danger because of Australia’s actions. It is not acceptable for the Government to maintain silence when the stakes are so high. We as Australians are entitled to know what the Government is doing in our name.

There are currently 120 Vietnamese in Australian immigration detention centres. There is no way of knowing how many have been turned back.

“Thanks Australia” (a letter from Nauru)



We, the helpless people, especially women and children residing in Nauru, thank the caring and understanding people of Australia who accepted us warmly like a kind mother without any expectation. And we also thank the Australian government that settled us in a country (Nauru) where no law and government and even the Human Rights Commission can help us. It settled those people in Nauru who took refuge in Australia because of the racial, ethnical and religious injustice and oppression of their own country, and now they buy them from a country (Nauru) and sell them to another country Cambodia like slaves, as if the slavery era has again been revived but in a new type of slavery.

We apologise that we took refuge in the hospitable and advanced country of Australia from the harassments and assaults in our own country.

Our daughters apologise that they escaped from the forced marriages and murders and took refuge in your kind country and caring government, but you exposed them to forced assaults by the drunk security guards of Nauru without any help and any means to escape.

We thank you that you took the calm and sweet dreams from our children and replaced them with playing on hot, phosphate rocks, and playing with the permanent members of the tents, i.e. crabs, rats, scorpions, millipedes and dangerous black spiders inside the dark, damp, warm and mouldy tents.

We thank you that instead of giving us our lost peace and security back, you replaced it with a life in fear, hopelessness about the dark future, horror, inferiority, stress and anxiety.

We thank you that children of 9 or 10 years old and fathers and mothers of 40 or 50 years old have no choice but to take sedative pills for having a quiet sleep because of fear and stress which of course is accompanied by bedwetting whether in children or women of 40 or 50 years old.

We thank you that you exposed our daughters and children to different skin and internal illnesses because of the shortage of water and lack of enough bathing during the day, for example, once a day and each time either for 1 minute or 3 minutes, and the poor hygiene and lack of enough healthy water whether for drinking or for bathing or for washing clothes.

We thank you that instead of teaching our children

From the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs papers; Pacific Women Shaping Pacific Development Nauru Country Plan Summary July 2014

There are no statistics on family and gender violence in Nauru but there is a general consensus that domestic violence, including sexual and physical violence against children and against women is a growing problem on the island. Responding to domestic violence requires inter-sectoral and coordinated action to ensure prevention, early intervention, comprehensive support for survivors or rehabilitation of perpetrators. Efforts to address domestic violence in Nauru remain limited. Beyond the Police Domestic Violence Unit and the Nauru Safe House, there are no other services available for women and their children who are survivors of domestic violence. Health workers who interact with, and treat, survivors of domestic violence are poorly equipped to handle cases. The health sector does not have any policies or protocols in place to ensure the delivery of minimum standards of service and referral of patients to other services, eg the police or the safe house.

Nauru is in the process of revising the Crimes Act which will include a chapter on domestic violence.

Men and women in Nauru do not perceive women as leaders, particularly in the political arena. The parliamentary system in Nauru relies on individuals rather than political parties making it difficult for independent women to put themselves forward for election. Under the Nauru system, candidates are required to develop a campaign, lobby for support among constituents and put together a political platform outlining potential policy changes. Women are rarely provided with the opportunity to develop and demonstrate these skills.

Can we read the letter opposite in the light of this DFAT report?

intellectual games for developing their mental and personality growth in order to make them useful for the future society and helpful for the progress of your beautiful country, you taught them sexual games and premature puberty and attention to sexual issues in the very young ages of, for example, 8 or 9 years old, and you made a generation out of these children that no training method and no psychologist or medicine will be able to correct and train them.

We thank you that irreversible mental damages like fear, stress, bedwetting, aggression, or being quiet and permanently staring to a spot, and not having a mental balance will be engraved in the mind, soul and personality of our children.

As free-hearted people who are looking for freedom, peace and tranquility, we, the asylum seeker and helpless people residing in Nauru have taken refuge in your country and we respect your caring and kind people and all the laws of your country. However, is it mentioned anywhere in the law (19 July) that children and women in Nauru should be mentally and physically tortured and is it mentioned that our children should be tortured and sexually harassed and assaulted whether in the camp or in the school?!!



Is it mentioned in this law that pregnant women should abort their babies of a few months who still do not know anything about life and politics because of physical and mental illness like fear, stress and lack of hygiene or wrong prescription of medicine by the nurses?

Finally, we thank the understanding government of Australia and all global organisations like the Human Rights Bodies and organizations for the protection of children and women and all informed and considerate people. We urge them to make decisions for the vulnerable people residing in Nauru and Manus based on wisdom, management, and logic and not based on emotions. We must no longer witness the attempted suicide of teenagers and youngsters from 15 to 18 years nor the adults, women and girls, nor to witness incidents (while the rule for releasing people from Christmas Island and not releasing people from Nauru into Australia was issued) like the story of a 16 years old girl who because of hopelessness lost her mental balance for a moment and decided to commit suicide by taking washing powder and unfortunately lost her voice and larynx, or young people like Hamid Khazaei or Reza Barati...

BASP Crisis accommodation

As reported in earlier newsletters, a group in Melbourne raised a significant amount of funds for BASP to provide crisis accommodation.

This has enabled BASP to lease 2 houses- one in Kings Park where 2 related families moved to in early January and a second in Sunshine West, for a woman and her 4 children.

The immediate availability of reasonable and furnished housing has been a wonderful support to both groups.

Initially it was thought the families would use these places as a short term option and then find alternative housing as they became acquainted with the community. Instead, as children have become established in schools, this approach has been reviewed to enable the families to take over the payment of the rent after a period eg 3 months, allowing BASP to take out further leases for people in urgent need of housing. Thus we are currently seeking another one or 2 places to lease. This needs to be affordable for the limited income support received by individuals and families, close to public transport and schools.

An experience of being deported from Australia



[Many people associated with BASP know this family and quite a number supported them in various ways. We will identify them only by initials.]

The family are Albanian refugees who gained citizenship in Italy around 17 years ago. There were parents and three young siblings, all in their early twenties. They are a very close family.

They were in immigration detention in Melbourne for nearly two years. The whole family helped others, assisting with looking after children, library work, art work and soccer, knitting hats for breast cancer sufferers donated to the Epworth Hospital.

They had experienced persecution and were in fear for their lives in Italy, where they were unable to gain protection. They came to Australia on a tourist visa and applied for protection. They spent all their money on migration agents who did little to help them.

Applications for protection in Australia were rejected on grounds that they could 'seek protection in Italy or any other EU country.' A final Request to the Minister for him to intervene was rejected on 16 February 2015.

All members of the family were in a fragile and vulnerable mental health situation because of their fear and anxiety. The mother has breast cancer and a heart condition and had been in the Melbourne Clinic with serious mental health issues, relating to her fear of being returned, for many months. The two girls have lost much weight and had time in hospital as well.

Two BASP people arranged to attend MITA on Wednesday 25 February 2015, and inform them of the Minister's decision not to allow them protection in Australia. All were very shaken but there was an attempt to begin a conversation about a safe way of returning to Italy and seeking some options for the future. This included help from Fr Maurizio, Director of Catholic Migration and Refugee Services in Australia and an approach to the Italian Consul and other people who could help.

The Department Case Manager advised in writing, by email that she had '*alerted SERCO and IHMS to ensure that supports are made available to the family in the event of any adverse reactions displayed by the family*'. She also telephoned the BASP Migration Agent and re-iterated several times that supports in health and welfare were in place.

Following this visit, the father and young people were taken by Serco guards to see the mother in hospital. On the way back the officer who was with them received a phone call from MITA and she was told to return to a different entrance in MITA. When they arrived at MITA they were made to wait in the van for half an hour, in front of a locked gate. Then the Manager of Serco appeared and they became very afraid. He opened the gate and after a few meters they were surrounded by more than 30 officers.

They were let out of the van one by one and escorted by 6 or 7 officers each, and each of them was pushed towards separate rooms. They were terrified and the girls were screaming in fear and calling for their father. Four officers grabbed the father and son. The father was then attacked by about a dozen officers who held his arms, legs and throat. They were all held down by arms and legs and thrown into separate rooms. They begged to be kept in a

room together, but this was ignored.

Eventually officers came and told the children that they were to be sent back to Italy that night, without their parents, because their mother was in hospital.

This was the first and only notification of removal they received.

They were all screaming and crying in pain and fear. The young man fell unconscious and a doctor came and revived him. They were all then handcuffed and pushed into separate vans. They had still not seen each other since they arrived back at MITA.

They arrived separately at the airport and were kept in separate rooms and not allowed to see each other. They were told that they were each going on separate flights, and they did indeed travel separately with 7 Officers accompanying each of them.

During the entire time, waiting and during the flight, they were all kept in handcuffs. The younger girl had a panic attack and was given some sort of medication. They were all crying the entire time. Seven officers were allocated to each young person at all times, and they surrounded them as they walked or moved.

People at the airport stared at them and moved away from them. They said they felt like criminals. During the entire separate trips on the planes, they all cried, and begged for details of their siblings and parents. These requests were always denied. When they finally arrived at the Rome airport they were given 160 Euros each and 5 days accommodation at a small hotel and then handed over to the Police, who questioned them, and then dismissed them.

They finally found each other at the airport and were together again. They took a taxi to the hotel which used 50 euros.

They stayed in the hotel only going out to find some food. They had not been allowed to pack any clothes and had travelled in summer clothes and with thongs on their feet- to an Italian winter. No winter clothes had been packed for them, just a few belongings each. Most of their belongings have been left at the MITA. They had no chance to even see any of these.

They all had abrasions from the handcuffs and other extensive bruises on their arms, legs and chests.

In the light of our experience detailed here, do we really need to give Serco Officers more power?

And yet there is a Bill currently working its way through the Federal Parliament that would allow anyone working in detention centres, to use whatever force they consider reasonable, to force those detained to comply. No matter what they did, so long as they consider it 'reasonable', they would be exempt from prosecution.

While the Secretary of the Department may investigate a complaint of excessive force, there is no obligation on him or her to do so. Complaints to the courts are specifically excluded if the officer acts 'in good faith' – something which itself is difficult to disprove, given that the whole test is the reasonableness of the officer's *belief*.



Dana and Delia, BASP Council Chair at the discussion night in March

At the BASP Discussion night on March 19th, those present were inspired and heartened by the presentation by Dana Afleck. Dana is currently studying law at Deakin University. She talked to us about her ways of trying to change the discourse about those seeking protection in Australia. We would encourage you all to look at the website of Road to Refuge (<http://www.roads-to-refuge.com.au/>). This is an interactive website that offers a lot of information and a chance to actually enter into the stories of many refugees.

There is an event Read Between the Wines: A Country Too Far: Book, Wine & Cheese Afternoon organised by Road to Refuge on Sunday, May 17 at 3:00pm at the Gallery 314 Richmond in Richmond, Victoria. On Sunday May 17 there will be talks by hosting contributors Arnold Zable and Judith Rodriguez.

What is there about helicopters and small boys?

Three excited small Tamil boys were trying to decide which remote controlled helicopter to get in the Victoria Market. Their mother, a widow and struggling to manage the three, watched with a degree of happiness. Not many moments of relaxation for this woman. She was badly burned in Sri Lanka, caught in a burning house set fire to by the Singhalese navy while she and her husband were sleeping.

She and her family lived for years between Sri Lanka and refugee camps in Tamil Nadu in India. She lived in poverty and sadness after her husband disappeared as a result of being constantly harassed in an Indian refugee camp.

This poor woman eventually decided it was too dangerous to remain in the camp and, with the financial assistance of her mother, was able to get a place on a boat with her three boys to try to find a safer life. This was the boat that was held by the Australian Government for one month on the open seas, all the time attempting to send those 'captured' back to India. When this failed they were sent to Nauru. One can only imagine how painful it has been for a woman with bad burns in the harsh heat of Nauru—in a plastic tent.



So the mother, mercifully in Melbourne for at least a while, watched with great patience the boys as they argued and eventually agreed on two helicopters and a couple of other toys.

When reminded that she should choose a gift for herself, she picked some trinkets—but then said they were for her brother and his daughter still in Tamil Nadu in the camp. This mother and children may be sent back to Nauru.

The tragedy of Nepal lived out in Melbourne

Among all the tragedies in Nepal, one was brought home to us recently. One Nepalese family is in community detention and another in closed detention. As they met and exchanged news, it transpired that both had families devastated by the earthquake, sleeping outside and waiting for aid to arrive.

The mixed emotions and almost warring reactions in this scenario are common among refugee families. Joy at meeting people who speak one's language, hospitality in sharing food that is one's own, pride in introducing small babies who are oblivious of the pain of parents, anguish in recalling the hardship of parents, siblings and friends still in the midst of suffering, immense sadness about the uncertainty of life with no chance of permanent settlement and, in this case, the fear of return to Nauru.

Volunteers

As well as the many volunteers in the Supporting Families through English Program, we also have volunteers visiting families in the community for general support, friendship and helping them become familiar with their community.

Christine showed a newly arrived family how to use the train and get around the city. She combined this with taking them to the Palm Sunday Rally, where they could see how much community support existed for asylum seekers.

A young woman fleeing from Northern Lebanon, with 4 children under 6 has been supported by Brigid initially and then more broadly by BASP volunteers. She said “As soon as I met Sr. Brigid, I knew my back was covered and I now belonged, even if I was frightened at night. Since moving into a BASP house in the community, my anxiety and sleeplessness has reduced and my son’s behaviour has improved greatly.”

Another volunteer, Cathy, has been a wonderful champion for a family she has been visiting since the birth of their first baby in January. The baby recently became ill and she has supported and assisted the couple through the long hospital stay and discussions with doctors.

[These examples have been given by Libby Saunders, our Volunteer Coordinator.]

Housing Support

The generosity of BASP supporters and the broader community continues to give hope and optimism, against the backdrop of cruel and uncaring government (and opposition) policies in relation to asylum seekers. A group of volunteers in Ballarat have housed and supported a number of asylum seekers for several months, pending their approval for financial support. Once their money is through, they assist with finding suitable and affordable accommodation while continuing with social support.



The parish at Kilmore has provided housing to an Iranian couple and their baby. The community has rallied around the social justice group’s initiative, providing practical support as well as introductions to employment opportunities for the husband. A wonderful response - greatly appreciated by the family.

Another BASP supporter who lives alone, has made his home available to a young 19 year old Afghani boy completing year 12 at a Catholic college. His visa status changed, which meant in 2 weeks, he was required to find free accommodation and after another 4 weeks, to manage with no financial support at all. The school and BASP will provide emotional and practical support while further efforts are made to address his visa status.

Another man has been similarly generous, taking a couple and their baby into his home pending their financial assistance being approved.

Grace, a young woman who was offered accommodation in Narre Warren pre Christmas has recently been offered work at the Marriott hotel. This was arranged through the Brotherhood of St Laurence program, but was made possible in the first instance, by her having stable and supportive housing.

Good News



Rose is a Year 1 student at Our Lady of the Sacred Heart School in Ringwood. She is pictured here bringing a wonderful array of groceries for BASP.



Rose wrote a letter to the Prime Minister, part of which reads: *As a six year old Australian girl it was sad because I think that sending people back to their homes when there are scary things like war is very very wrong.*

Rose and her mother and little brother came to bring groceries for BASP.

Palm Sunday Walk



Police estimated a crowd of 15,000 walked in support of asylum seekers and advocating humane government policies on Palm Sunday of this year. BASP supporters were well represented.

Planning is happening for World Refugee Day on Sunday 21 June in Melbourne. We are asking for groups to volunteer to organise a number of Pop-Up Protests in various locations around the city culminating in a Grand Finale action at Federation Square. If you are interested in participating please contact us at BASP.

As a follow up to Palm Sunday GetUp has a petition still online. You could help the cause by signing it.

getup.org.au/asylumseekers



The difference it makes to grow something

Staff from CLC, a Catholic secondary school in Eltham, have been an amazing support to a family getting settled in Lalor. Among many other practical supports, some staff helped clear the back yard of the rented property and begin a garden. This has given the father of the family immense pleasure and a focus. He spends time planting and digging and he says it gives him an alternative to just sitting and worrying.



Baby Fatemah is nearly one. She is the baby sister to Amir Ali, who arrived in Australia with his mother two years ago last Christmas.

The children's father, Dawood, is running a pizza shop in Dandenong North. He is about to introduce kebabs into the menu - a little more culturally aligned!

Dawood came to Australia as an Unaccompanied Minor. It is wonderful to see young families finding their feet and, really against all odds, getting established in this country.

BASP has also begun a small food run for families facing exceptional hardship eg partner in detention, unexpected expenses etc.

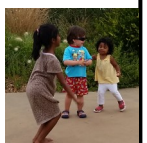
The BASP pantry provides the non perishable components and Second Bite provides fruit and vegetables. It began with one volunteer but has expanded to have a driver and jockey to assist in the preparation and delivery each fortnight.

BASP avoids duplication of services wherever possible but those in this run are not able to access other food bank options such as the ASRC food truck in Footscray on Friday afternoons, or Lentara.



The Sisters of Charity have made a house where the Sisters lived in Glenroy available for BASP to accommodate asylum seekers.

A family with three little girls are currently in the house. This has been wonderful as it is giving the father a chance to look for work and the mother to begin some training which should enable her to have more chance to get work.



Two of the girls with a playmate

How you can help ...

Winter Needs

Many of the families BASP is supporting are experiencing their first Australian cold season in the community. They have been in detention on Christmas Island, in Darwin or Melbourne (where there was heating) for previous winters.

With already tight finances, the cost of heating stretches them beyond their limits in some situations. **Warm blankets, floor rugs and portable/lower cost heaters** are being sought.

BASP's food assistance is also in high demand.

Basmati rice as well as **dried lentils, burghal and chick peas** (in preference to those in tins) are especially welcome.

Tinned tomatoes, washing powder, cleaning products, tea and coffee are always popular. **Snacks for school lunches** such as sultana packs, dried fruits are good.

Quite a number of families have small children, so **disposable nappies and wipes** are an ongoing need. We recently had a number of boxes of all sizes donated by Woodard's Camberwell and these will be distributed over coming weeks.



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.

BASP thanks those who help.



She sat with her shoulders hunched, her whole body spelling defeat. "I am tired" she said. And that was probably an understatement. A woman who left her home country, left her husband and two children, battled the Australian authorities, to get recognition of her plight, got a Permanent Visa, worked in jobs that were exhausting, sent money to her sick sister who was caring for her children, managed to ensure her husband had some hope as he was in hiding, paid for health checks, security checks, DNA tests and everything else and then could see some light at the end of the tunnel—except for the air fares to bring her family together again. How long was it going to take to save \$4,500 for these? No wonder she was tired.

We tell this story only to indicate that BASP can help fund tickets and people in these sorts of circumstances—only through your generosity. On behalf of people in this sort of situation, thank you.

As well, we thanks all those who give of their time and energy. We have an amazing team of people who help those who have little hope except for those in the community who are trying to bring humanity to this situation.

Brigid Arthur (for BASP)