

STRENGTH AND KINDNESS

Brigidine Asylum Seekers Project (BASP)



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

Newsletter 79 April 2016

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

Lost and found

There is a beautiful story told by Oliver Jeffers of friendship and loneliness, a boy and a penguin. There once was a boy... and one day a penguin arrives on his doorstep. The boy decides the penguin must be lost. But no one seems to be missing a penguin. So the boy decides to take the penguin home himself, and they set out in his row boat on a journey to the South Pole.



But the journey to the South Pole is long and difficult in the boy's rowboat. There are storms to brave and deep, dark nights. To pass the time, the boy tells the penguin stories. Finally, they arrive. Yet instead of being happy, both are sad. That's when the boy realizes: The penguin hadn't been lost, it had merely been lonely.

Maybe this has some parallel with the stories of refugees. They feel adrift in a world that crumbles around them. They get to a possible place of haven but it is very lonely. Nothing of the familiar, no-one to be friends with, a sense of hope for a new life tempered by an actual isolation in a different place.

At one stage the boy tries to get a big liner to take the penguin to the South Pole—but he cannot make himself heard over the noise the big ship is making. Maybe this is like us trying to get help from all the big players in the community and government—only to discover that we ourselves in small ways can actually help.

Time and again we find that having friends makes a huge difference to people when they first get into the community. Sometimes these families and individuals just need friends. Friends who have a practical bent are really helpful. There are often forms to fill in, people to contact, items to buy at reasonable prices and so on. And above all, people who care and listen. Like penguin those who are newly arrived are anxious to learn about places and situations that are often very foreign to them.



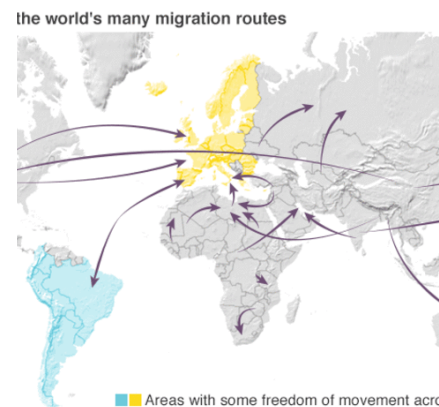
After all, a friend is someone who anchors us and makes us feel less adrift — or lost — and less alone in the world.

As with the boy and penguin, the power of friendship to enrich life is two dimensional. Those of us who have many friends who have come seeking safety feel very fortunate to have met so many amazing individuals. When we first meet people who arrive here hoping for a new beginning, those of us who have always lived here may feel as though we are the 'rescuers' but in time relationships are always two-way and mutual.

Donations to the Brigidine Asylum Seekers Project are tax deductible

A look at the global picture for both refugees and host countries

The world is currently witnessing the biggest refugee crisis since World War II. Today's figures are dramatic. They include a global displacement figure of around 60 million people, and more than 160 refugee host countries. Moreover, it is predicted that by the end of 2016 there will be 4.7 million refugees from Syria alone. Some 13.5 million Syrians will be internally displaced and in desperate need of international aid, with the United Nations appealing for over \$7 billion to assist them. Globalisation has opened up enormous new possibilities for those having to flee or choosing to move. In the first six weeks of 2016, more than 80,000 refugees and migrants arrived in Europe by boat, with more than 400 deaths. Many thousands continue to gather at the continent's external borders seeking to cross.



Many countries have times when the problems that cause people to leave to seek protection elsewhere lessen in intensity but then flare up again. Afghanistan is certainly a case of this with the Taliban (or extremist forces that target certain groups—in particular the Hazaras) becoming stronger again.

Iran: Recently Iran's Foreign Minister, Javad Zarif, came to Canberra for talks to increase economic ties with Australia. His counterpart in Australia, Julie Bishop, is obviously keen to obtain agreement about sending failed Iranian asylum seekers back home.

It is good for those advocating for justice for those seeking protection here that Iranian human rights record is very dubious. Authorities such as Amnesty International have confirmed that last year the use of the death penalty in Iran soared to its highest level in a decade. The United Nations special rapporteur on Iran confirmed that Iran executed between 996 and 1054 people in 2015, mostly for drug offenses. Children feature on the long list of those executed.

Iranian authorities continue to clamp down on free speech and peaceful dissent. Revolutionary courts have handed down harsh sentences against social media users, including several death sentences. People affiliated with banned opposition parties, labour unions, and student groups are routinely prosecuted. Ethnic and religious minorities are persecuted and women face widespread discrimination. And Iran continues to imprison dozens of activists and human rights defenders for their peaceful or professional activities.

Australia routinely sends asylum seekers, who have been given scant opportunity to actually formally apply for protection here, back to Sri Lanka and there is evidence that at least some of these end up in jail and are persecuted. While the civil war between the Sinhalese led government and Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (the LTTE, also known as the Tamil Tigers), ostensibly finished in 2009, Tamil people are still leaving in large numbers and there is a lot of evidence that many are at risk of severe persecution.

There are also significant ethnic minorities in our region that are particularly vulnerable, such as the **Rohingya in Myanmar**. For example in May last year Rohingya and Bangladesh migrants were stranded at sea. Hundreds died of starvation and dehydration. Asked to help, Tony Abbott infamously said "Nope, nope, nope". Malaysia eventually agreed to provide temporary shelter to those who arrived in Malaysia. The majority of Bangladeshi migrant workers have since been repatriated. Malaysia has agreed to allow Rohingyas in need of protection to stay, on the condition that they will be resettled within a year. They are still in detention.

Brigidine Asylum Seekers Project

Discussion Night 1 - 2016

Thursday, May 5th, 2016

From Fear to Safety

Alternatives to Australia's current policies towards refugees and those seeking protection in this country

Speaker: Dr Robyn Sampson

Senior Advisor and Research Coordinator

International Detention Coalition (IDC)

With opportunities to discuss the issues involved

We will give an update on the various ways BASP is helping people seeking asylum and also explore the needs and what further assistance is needed.

Time: 7.30 – 9.30p.m

Venue:

St Joseph's Hall

(beside the bluestone church)

274 Rouse St , Port Melbourne



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

Risk assessments—and Nauru and Manus Island as work places

Most of us these days are involved in assessing the risks inherent in work places and activities. Specifically the criteria of the Work Health and Safety Act have to be satisfied. The Act sets out two decision-making criteria. The first criterion is “health”, including “psychological health”.

The second is “safety”. Evidence of assaults on both Nauru and Manus (including a murder in Manus) and sexual assaults on women and children on Nauru have been given in Senate Select Committee hearings.

The provisions of the Act are that significant risks of harm be identified and, as much as possible, eliminated. There are quite stiff penalties for not adhering to the Act. So why do Nauru and Manus, clearly places that the Australian Immigration Department manage, fall outside the provisions of the Act?

Is the question: Who has the right to have rights? Clearly not people seeking our protection.



Time lines for those seeking asylum

The times people have to wait seem interminable. A Tamil man has a judicial review in April next year and he will receive no income in the meantime, as well as having his work rights withdrawn. Another man has a court case set for November next year.



The ‘Legacy Caseload’ cohort (those who arrived by boat between 13th August 2012 and 19th July 2013) have been just waiting to get a letter inviting them to apply for a protection visa. There are 30,000 of these people and to date a few thousands have received the letter. However the predictions are that it will be 2018 before everyone is given the opportunity to apply for refugee status and maybe more than a decade before all appeals and final stages are reached. Even then all that these folk can get is a Temporary Visa—to be renewed after three or five years.

Other people are waiting in detention for an answer about their future. The average time for a person in detention now is more than 450 days. One man, currently in Melbourne, has been in different centres for 8 years and another for over 5.

For some this seems interminable and causes a lot of anxiety, hopelessness and self – harm. One man said recently “One day in here (MIDC) seems like a year anywhere else”. He then worked out this would make him over 600 years old. We laughed about ‘as old as Methuselah’ (which had to be explained).

From our observations over the years, it does not seem as though lack of adequate immigration department staffing is the problem. It seems rather that the fact that most people have no decision making powers and everything seems to be constantly referred to someone else.

Recently, a migration agent received a message from the Department (after 15 months and at that stage the case appeared completed except for formality) stating that a particular application would be finalised *‘as soon as possible and it is currently with the Temporary Protection Visa Assessments Team undergoing the relevant identity, character and health checks. Unfortunately, it is not possible for me to provide you with a specific timeframe for completion of these assessments, as the time taken can vary greatly from one case to another. We appreciate your patience and understanding’*.

Accommodation

The **Crisis Accommodation funds** through Robert Allanadale 15 months ago has been fully used and Robert and his committee are planning a further fundraising function to continue the support this has provided.

They have developed a video <https://youtu.be/P7-qsTau9M> which gives feedback to the original donors on the benefits achieved by contribution. It is hoped it will also encourage people to contribute to continue this initiative.

To date these funds have enabled BASP to assist about 45 people, through 6 rental properties and funding emergency housing costs. Some of the people in the rental properties were able to take over the payment of rent after the initial period and through this were able to develop a rental history and gain a reference from BASP to move into new lease agreements for themselves. Others, due to uncertainty of income support and personal circumstances, continue to have their rent paid or topped up by BASP. Having these funds has meant a significant number of people have lived in suitable housing, with some security, while finding their feet in a new community - and country. One man who has been in detention for over 5 years, was only able to leave if he had a firm address he could go to on his release. These funds enabled BASP to have a house for him to go to.

With the increasing harsh assessments of people's visa application, and unclear policies about who does or does not receive financial assistance, BASP considers there will be an ongoing need to assist people with housing, by taking out a lease in its name and / supplementing rental costs for those on fluctuating or no income support.

Parish Housing Support

The parish at Diamond Creek has been preparing a house on the parish grounds for some time to be ready for asylum seekers. In early March, they welcomed 2 Somali women and a child into the house. These women came together on the boat from Indonesia and have met up again in Melbourne. They have been touched by the response of the parish to set up the house in readiness for them and introducing the mother and child to a playgroup. They are gradually learning their way around the local area and the public transport options available to them. They, like so many others, are waiting for their Invitation to Apply for a visa from the Department of Immigration. Their only options at this point are a 3 or 5 year temporary visa.

We never cease to be amazed that Immigration authorities (through their contracted service providers) make really outrageous decisions about where people will live. For example, a man with his small toddler was put in a house in Craigieburn while his wife was hospitalised in Werribee. Another family was put in Roxburgh Park with the stipulation that their children had to go to a school in Coolaroo (an hour and a half by bus).

Karin Butterfield is one of our volunteers who has assisted BASP and many of the families we know with their housing needs.

Initially Karin helped with finding a few houses and units which BASP rented with the crisis accommodation funds, using her professional expertise in this area. She was able to establish strong working relationships with key real estate agents to secure suitable and affordable housing. Since then she has also assisted families with their own applications for houses, resulting in greater success than when they were trying themselves.

Recently a father was trying to secure a house for himself and his daughter and getting nowhere with his applications. Once Karin became involved, he was successful. While he was thanking her profusely for her help, she said to him that "it always helps to give an agent a business card so that we look more professional." He replied and said "You ARE a business card." A great line! Many thanks to Karin for all she does for BASP.



Campaigns:

In mid January of this year, a High Court judgment affirmed the power of the Australian government to establish, fund and control detention centres in foreign countries. That decision impacted on 267 asylum seekers, including 37 babies born in Australia to asylum seeker mothers who were party to the court case – they could be removed to Nauru on 72 hours' notice. Prior to this announcement Minister Peter Dutton said all those from Nauru would be returned within a few weeks after the court case.



Training offered to people willing to help in the Sanctuary movement

Campaign Let them stay: this was a consortium of many different groups, led by Getup!, Human Rights Law Centre and the Australian Churches Task Force for refugees. It was largely unbranded, disciplined, and it kept 267 people here. This shows us the power of advocacy.

Sanctuary movement: As of today, 122 churches across all States and Territories have joined the Australian Church Sanctuary Movement. Sanctuary is not a legal concept in Australia. It is not likely to be a defence to any charges that a person (or organisation) might face as a consequence of assisting asylum seekers. There are charges (up to 10 years jail and a fine of up to \$180,000) that a person could face for harbouring a refugee or obstructing Australian Federal Police from doing their duty. However the people involved in this movement have almost to a last person been much more questioning about – are we sure any actions to give sanctuary would not harm the asylum seekers. The answer to this is there are possible negative effects for the asylum seekers – they might be given a negative security clearance or fail the 'good character test' – which could stop them getting a visa in the future. Any action taken would only be on the basis that everyone concerned (people seeking sanctuary and those offering it) are very clear about the realities. The movement is not about trying to get people arrested but about protecting the 267 individuals from being returned to Nauru and bringing fundamental change to what is happening. However no-one would seek sanctuary (or be helped to do so) unless there was no other option and the alternative would be being sent back to Nauru.

Love makes a way is another movement of Christians seeking an end to Australia's inhumane asylum seeker policies through prayer and nonviolent love in action. Members of this group are also actively working with the Campaigns mentioned above. BASP has been involved in these movements and we encourage others to participate as much as possible.

Inroads are being made – but they are very tenuous. Two months ago there was political capital in cruelty. Now the Government has realised there is more political capital in kindness; this is reflected in the National Polling that we have been conducting since the first week in February, when the Let Them Stay and the Sanctuary Movements were launched.



A very successful Palm Sunday Walk for Justice for Refugees

Meanwhile, 180 of the 267 people who were facing deportation back to Nauru are now in community detention in Australia. But to be clear, the Minister has continued to insist that none of these people will be resettled in Australia. Are children out of Detention? Yes. Are children out of Danger? No. We remember that 2005 John Howard said no children were in detention. That children could never again be put in detention was not enshrined in law and successive governments have reintroduced family detention.

Indonesia and the implications for Australia

One of the issues that pose a moral issue for Australia is the current situation of many people seeking asylum who are in limbo in Indonesia. Indonesia has long been a transit country for thousands of people trying to seek asylum in Australia. In September 2013, Australia launched Operation Sovereign Borders which increased the policing of its waters and turned back boats. This has been done with such efficiency that the route from Indonesia to Australia has all but been blocked off. However, several hundred new asylum seekers are arriving in Indonesia every month. An ever-increasing number are now spending years stuck in a country that does not recognise them as refugees nor offer any possibility of local integration.

Resettlement to a third country is the only option for most of the nearly 14,000 asylum seekers and refugees now stranded in Indonesia (up from 10,000 two years ago). Australia used to be the country that accepted the majority of refugees in Indonesia for resettlement, but now it only takes those who registered there before July 2014. Other countries with resettlement programmes, many of them preoccupied with the refugee exodus from Syria, have done little to help.

With no right to work and little support available from the UN's refugee agency, UNHCR, many new arrivals simply hand themselves over to the Indonesian authorities knowing that at least they'll be fed and sheltered while they're detained.

But Indonesia's 13 detention facilities are now bursting at the seams. According to the Global Detention Project, 2,806 asylum seekers are currently in immigration detention, many of them unaccompanied minors living in conditions that are often overcrowded and that Human Rights Watch has described as "appalling".



Antje Missbach, a researcher based at Monash University in Melbourne who recently published a Book, Troubled Transit, a book about the asylum seekers stuck in limbo in Indonesia, said that upcoming elections in Australia meant it was unlikely the government would reverse its hard-line policy of deterring asylum seekers anytime soon.

Indonesia's own government also shows little sign of changing its policy of not recognising or integrating refugees. "They have their own internally displaced people, high unemployment and many people living below the poverty line – that has always been their stance. But I think if there was political will to change policy, they surely could," Missbach said.

While the previous Indonesian administration indicated that it was prepared to sign up to the 1951 Refugee Convention, the current government, which took power in 2014, has made no similar commitment.

"For the time being, they could try to do more to accommodate asylum seekers," Missbach said. "For years they have been working on a presidential decree that would provide a domestic framework... but it's very unlikely they'll be given the right to work or study."

The immigration detention centre in Makassar on Indonesia's Sulawesi Island is one of 13 across the country holding nearly 2,000 migrants and asylum seekers, including women and children. With the current policies, this number will only increase.

It is not just in Greece that refugees are stranded.

We have relied on *Integrated Regional Information Networks (IRIN)* for much of the information given here.

Where else would you want to be on April 1 but manning a Bunnings Sausage Sizzle!

Marian is a BASP volunteer who assists us in helping people find work. This may involve preparing a resume, linking them to work options as well as seeking potential employers. With all this in mind, she hit upon on Sausage Sizzle at Bunning . This is her report.

Anyone who's visited a Bunnings has no doubt seen a community group out the front manning the sausage sizzle. Ready to go, affordable and delicious, the Sausage Sizzle offers people the chance to quell hunger pains and gives them the feeling they have helped the community in the process.

So on April 1 2016 from 9am – 4pm a team of wonderful chefs, sales people, onion choppers and helpers volunteered at the BASP sausage sizzle at Port Melbourne.

Well cooked snags with onion, wrapped inside a slice of bread with drippings of sauce... yum! How could you resist – and more than 400 people didn't resist! , mountains of onions and more than 20 loaves of bread.

The sausage sizzle raised \$751.60, made some good contacts regarding work opportunities as well as raising BASP's profile.

Thanks to Chris, Marian, Davood, Davod, Minna, Robert, Geoff, Javad, Bob and Jamil and Christine.



Owing money

It is amazing that so many families and individuals manage to survive on the money they receive while on a Bridging Visa or are in Community Detention. However any unforeseen event or situation can upset the proverbial applecart!

To give an example, a single mother with a thirteen year old daughter and a four year old son, had been released from detention in Sydney. She receives Centrelink \$1050 a fortnight or \$2100 a month. She moved to Melbourne because she thought there may be more support here. Her rent is \$1244 a month. When she moved to Melbourne she had to pay the normal bond and the first 4 weeks rent. You can only get assistance to pay these once. And she had got that help in Sydney. She borrowed that money and is paying it back at \$300 a month. She also owed \$800 to the electricity provider.

BASP has been able to help this family with food and financial assistance —but you don't have to be a financial wizard to work out that families like this end up with not enough money even for food.

Fragile hope dashed

You can probably picture this scene: A woman who has been in detention for months; she waits with great anxiety for news from Border Force about her future; she is desperate to get out because she has three small children in her home country; she is told to come and see her Case Manager (Border Force employee) the following morning. She doesn't sleep all night with at least a small hope that this means good news. She is met by her Case Manager and another person to be told that the meeting was to inform her that a new case Manager had been appointed! Some of us would like to write a manual for workers in the Immigration field.

Volunteering

BASP was contacted earlier this year by the Colostomy Association of Victoria (CAV) asking if we **knew any** people seeking asylum who would be interested in voluntary work. We met with one of the key people at CAV, based in the city, to ascertain the type of work available. We then matched a couple of people we knew were seeking meaningful activity and introduced them to CAV. The 2 people are both enjoying the work and the company of those at CAV. The experience will also provide them with a reference on their resume when they are granted the right to work by Immigration.

The following comment is from CAV, from it's perspective.

"The Colostomy Association of Victoria is one of three places in Melbourne where people who have a stoma can go to and access the medical supplies they require each month. It is administered and staffed by volunteers who process nearly 1000 orders every month! Yeshi and Morteza are our two newest "recruits" to our team and they have been welcomed with open arms. It is always a little overwhelming for new volunteers to step in and really grasp what is happening around them – phones are ringing, computers are dinging, paper forms are flinging – we even have one volunteer who spends her day singing! Morteza's primary task at the moment is to answer the phones and direct calls as required. He also attends to the counter and assists our members when they come to collect their supplies. Yeshi is volunteering in the stock room and is learning and practising the procedures required to efficiently order, receive and deliver hundreds of items to hundreds of people. Early days yet, but both Morteza and Yeshi are fitting in well and keen to "learn the ropes". The CAV is very thankful for their efforts and enthusiasm."

Weekend getaway

Members of the Mariana Community, a group of women who are part of the Pallotti family, offered a weekend away for a couple of families. The community has a large, well-appointed house in Millgrove, near Warburton in beautiful rural surroundings.

So 2 families were identified for a weekend in early April. Both families have spent 2-3 years in Nauru, then in MITA and have only recently been released into Community Detention. They had not ventured much beyond Broadmeadows so it was wonderful to see their reaction to the broader city, then countryside on the way to the house. In the front paddock were a herd of alpaca and there were wonderful walks, fresh air and discoveries of flora, including a plant which they use as greens and we do not. The children and adults enjoyed the company of Sr Brigid and the Mariana members for the weekend.



A birthday party

Several families who are on tenuous visa paths have had birthday parties for their children over the past weeks. One can only admire their resilience and determination to give their children as normal experiences as possible. Friends in the community have also rallied to come and enjoy the occasion and provide a convivial atmosphere. May the next birthdays be celebrated with the knowledge of secure futures.



Some of the parents say to us things such as 'I get nightmares about the possibility of being sent back to Nauru'. And then later in the same conversation 'I must get a job and money to educate my children and a car to take them to new places ..' This underlines the totally ambivalent and insecure position these people are in.

Catching up

Yun Cheat lived in the BASP house in Albert Park for quite a while. We think this was in the period about 2008 to 2009 but our records are not good!! Yun came in to see us a few weeks ago. He was accompanied by his wife, two daughters and his mother in law. Yun and his wife are from Cambodia and they are now citizens of Australia.



A little Didier
(from facebook)

Didier who also lived in the Albert Park house is now married with two children and living in the Werribee area. Didier worked for Citywater for a long time and now has part time work while he studies for a Masters of Business Administration.



On February 27, 2016 an article was printed in the Age and Sydney Morning Herald. It was titled 'How refugee and Nauru detainee Nabi Baqiri became a fruit-picking millionaire' We rang Nabi and caught up with him after many years (although Brigid has visited him a few times in his home in Shepparton).



Nabi Baqiri was one of the first families BASP helped. Somehow we got a message that a family had just been released from detention and were in Dandenong in a house with no furniture.



From left: Reza, Nabi, Noor, Jawaher,
Rahela, Rezwana, Raihana Baqir

This was 2001 or 2002. And so we met Nabi—with little English and five children. The family was beautiful. One morning Nabi and his brother, Jamshed, were at Albert Park getting some forms completed and Jamshed took a message on his phone and said 'I have just been given a Permanent Visa.'

It is wonderful to learn of the family's success. Many people advocate for government assistance for newly arrived people to be given a chance to settle in the country and the provision of help to set up industries. Nabi and people like him prove it can work and how good it is for Australia.

Sadly we had news last week that Safi, the son of **Mukhtiar Tanoli** (another resident of the BASP house in Ardeer in the time around 2008 to 2010) died. Safi was ill from birth and he had been so lovingly cared for by Samira his mother and Mukhtiar. All who know Mukhtiar and Samira offer their deep sympathy on the loss of their much loved Safi. The oldest girl in the family, Tareem, is doing her final VCE year at Marian College in Sunshine West.

We spoke to **Dawood Sharifi** a short while ago. He was a minor in detention in 2012. Dawood is married with three children.. His wife and son John Ali came to Australia just before Christmas in 2012. The family has since increased by two daughters! Dawood has owned a pizza shop for some time. He has recently decided not to renew the lease. However he says he learned a lot about running a business in Australia and he will do it again.

Moussa Youssef, the 2nd son of Fatemeh (the family from Chad) has just attended his citizenship ceremony. When asked if he was having a party to celebrate, he said, "no"- he would wait until his mother and siblings got their citizenship and they would all celebrate together.



SCHOOL CONNECTIONS



BASP food coordinator
Noelle with staff from
Bialik

Bialik College Action for Purim

Around the time we celebrated Easter, the Jewish Community celebrates Purim, a celebration of the saving of Jews after a plan to kill them long ago, which now involves thanksgiving and help to others.

Two of the teachers came to discuss what the students might do to support people seeking Australia's protection and it was decided to collect food for some vulnerable families and individuals. BASP gave a small outline of these people to make it more real for the students.

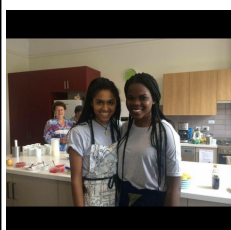
Their collections were made into specific and generous food parcels for each group and the students added a personal note of welcome and support from Bialik College. This personal touch was heart warming and very well received.

Loyola Christian Service Program - 2 year 11 students from Loyola College spent a week at BASP in March visiting families with some of our volunteers to get a firsthand experience of people seeking protection in Australia. This is their account compiled by one of them - Daniella.

As a part of our Activities week, Shanice and I were lucky enough to spend our week at the Brigidine Asylum Seeker Project, based in Albert Park. This organization works with asylum seekers both locally and in detention centres. Their main aim is to provide advocacy for the rights of asylum seekers, educate about the asylum seekers issues and provided support (such as English tutoring, financial support and even support with writing resumes etc). The organization strongly and utterly go and live by their motto which is 'strength and kindness.' Shanice and I can both agree that this was showed throughout our experience everyone was so optimistic, kind and believed that as Australians we should be helping our fellow brothers and sisters just as Jesus told us to 'love others.'

Whilst working with this organisation we were lucky enough to visit the families, help deliver food, speak to some of the volunteers and the most eye opening experience which was going to the detention centre in Broadmeadows. We knew that visiting the detainees was going to be a sorrowful moment and it indeed was! Both Shanice and I are 100% against mandatory detention practices so it is fair to say that we were both out of words when we met these people.

Most of the families there were separated from their families, so as you can imagine they felt isolated from everyone else not only because their ability to learn English and seek out employment was impaired but also because they felt like they were 'criminals' and also their chances of developing mental problems was high. Even though these people are going through the toughest times of their life every single one of them had a smile on their faces when talking and it just goes to show that they have hope in life and are not giving up !



After our placement Shanice and I came with a clear understanding of how the government have been treating asylum seekers, we got a taste of how families are coping. Most importantly Libby and Sr Brigid and all the volunteers at BASP taught us that racial and ethnic differences do not justify inequitable treatment, everyone is equal in rights and dignity, regardless of citizenship or immigration status and every human should have the right to live in a country that is accepting and offers support to the less vulnerable.





Some food and household goods are much more in demand than others

Staples are: Sugar, Tinned tomatoes, tins of fruit, Tuna (plain), Long life milk, tea and coffee

Basmati rice as well as **dried lentils, burghal and chick peas** (in preference to those in tins) are especially welcome. We usually run out of cooking oil.

Washing powder, cleaning products, toilet paper and tooth paste

Cooking oil is always welcome.

Quite a number of families have small children, so **disposable nappies and wipes** are an ongoing need.

Something Special

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

We have an ample supply of tinned soup and beetroot so no more needed at this point.



First a big thank you to those who donated tools and garden equipment to assist the start-up of small business activity. Ahmad has had a few gardening jobs already and is keen to build this work if possible. He is keen, strong and able to do the mowing and general clean-up work, while still learning the finer points of gardening.

Anyone in need of this service please call BASP.



Many thanks to the donor who funded a play gym for a young mother with 4 children 4 years and under. The 4 year old was so excited at the prospect, inviting her friends to come and play - even before it had arrived. This will give the children many hours of playing and no doubt give the mum a bit of a breather!



The food donations continue to maintain our pantry supplies and we thank all the parishes who do this so generously and regularly throughout the year. People come to the centre to collect food as well as some being delivered by volunteers to their homes. Noelle, who manages the pantry, does a wonderful job in storing and preparing the deliveries.

Thanks for the financial assistance. Without the ongoing donations we receive we could not continue to help those who need protection here. Occasionally we cannot thank someone because a donation comes as a direct debit but no address or identification. We always regret this—so if those contributing let us know who you are, it would make us feel better!

Brigid Arthur

Brigid Arthur

Libby Saunders

Libby Saunders

(BASP Coordinators)