

STRENGTH AND KINDNESS

Brigidine Asylum Seekers Project (BASP)



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

Newsletter 92 June 2019

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

Looking at the results of the recent election through the lens of an asylum seeker is very depressing. At BASP we had been telling our friends who are in limbo that better things can be expected after the election.

The reunion of tens of thousands of people has been thwarted in their longing for family reunion by the policies of the Australian Government. All those arriving by boat have only been given temporary visas and without a permanent visa they can't apply for their family to join them. The Labor Party had promised to change temporary visas into permanent visas so we at BASP had been telling those (mostly men) desperate for an opportunity to have their wives and children join them 'Just be patient. After the election things will be different.' Now these folk are saying to us, 'What now? Please help us.' This is an absolutely agonising time for them.

There are other issues for anyone in Australia seeking to get family reunion. However, the restrictions applying to people arriving by boat are among the most odious.

One man told us that there were families in Quetta waiting in anticipation of hearing the results of the election to know whether they had any chance of being united with their fathers and husbands.

BASP is trying to support a man whose wife died of cancer and whose children are in Quetta. They have been by themselves for five years. The oldest is a boy eighteen years of age who tries to get a bit of casual work. He has no chance to live anything like a 'normal' life as he is left to care for his siblings. He said to his father lately 'You have to come home and look after them. They are your kids'. Understandable and heartbreaking. But if our Hasara friend went back to Quetta they would all be destitute.

A small child in a detention centre some years ago told Brigid she had two small brothers still in Somalia. She said 'Can't they come here? They wouldn't take up much room.'

Indeed all the families of those we see now would not take up an inordinate amount of space either.

So the question now is 'What do we do?' We keep in mind our community of people seeking refuge and we use all of our energy and skills in trying to bring changes—irrespective of the political party in government. And we refuse to despair.



Acknowledgment to Simon Kneebone

Donations to the Brigidine Asylum Seekers Project are tax deductible

What are the most urgent changes needed to bring some level of decency to the way Australia is treating people seeking asylum?

- **Ensuring all those stuck on Manus Island and Nauru are able to get a place to go to.** Since 13 August 2012, 4,177 people have been sent to Nauru or PNG as part of offshore processing arrangements. As of 26 March 2019, there were 359 people left in Nauru and 547 left in PNG (a total of 915 people) As of 26 March 2019, 508 people had departed for the US. Up till 18 February 2019, there had been 1,246 people transferred to Australia for medical reasons (including accompanying family members). By 26 March 2019, 953 of these are still remaining in Australia. . As of 26 March 2019, there were 359 people left on Nauru, 547 people left in PNG. (RCOA figures)
- **Making all Temporary Protection visas (including SHEVs) into Permanent Visas.** Currently anyone who has a Temporary Visa—the only one people who arrived by boat can get—are facing a lifetime of separation from families and a lifetime of being second class citizens in Australia. The temporary visas are for three or five years and those having them will have to be reassessed at the end of each period and indefinitely into the future. This compounds the trauma and uncertainty already faced by our refugee communities. This requirement is cruel and unnecessary. It forces people to relive their experiences of trauma with each new assessment, preventing them from healing psychologically, especially in the context of a lack of family support. People on these visas have already been accepted as genuine refugees so all this could be changed by the Government of the day simply changing the rules.
- **Restoring the income support (SRSS) for people who are seeking asylum.** Included in this is not making any further cuts to those waiting for a decision on their refugee claims. There are people who had their SRSS cut because, for example they sent \$50 overseas for a funeral of a family member. The system is actually getting more punitive with notice given that in the future those with SRSS will be reassessed for eligibility every three months.
- **Repealing the ‘fast track’ system.** The fast track system was introduced in 2014 to process the backlog of 30,000 undetermined cases of asylum seekers who arrived in Australia by boat before 2013. It established the IAA to handle applications for temporary protection visas in place of the lengthy process by the AAT—the Administrative Appeals Tribunal. The IAA gives much less opportunity for an asylum seeker to get a positive outcome than the AAT which is available to all those asylum seekers arriving by air.
- **All those waiting for decisions about their refugee status be given work rights.** This also includes everyone having an up to date Bridging visa. Many do not get their Bridging visas renewed and because of this, they do not have Medicare access. They can wait for months, sometimes years where they are actually illegally in Australia due to administrative delays in reviewing cases in a timely way.
- **Having a much quicker outcome for ‘double negatives’.** People whose claim is rejected first by the Department of Immigration and then by IAA or AAT have one last option and that is to appeal, where possible, to the Federal Circuit Court. The time to get a hearing at the Federal court is two or three years. During this time people usually don’t have work rights or access to any other support. Apart from anything else this is clogging up the courts and worse, leaving many destitute.
- **Releasing people in detention on the mainland.** There are 1,312 detained (as at 31st March, 2019) and the average time in detention is 483 days with 275 people having spent in more than 730 days in detention. There are people here in Melbourne who have been more than 10 years in MITA.
- **Ensuring funding for legal centres that undertake the work of supporting people to apply for refugee status.** Without help many put in applications by themselves and these have almost no chance of success.



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

BASP Discussion Session 2 – 2019
Wednesday, 19th June, 1.30 – 3.30 pm
At 54 Beaconsfield Pde Albert Park
(Brigidine Ministries centre)

All we have is uncertainty

**An outline of all the areas where asylum seekers are in
limbo**

Several people who are in this situation will tell us what it is like

Josh Lorenz will reflect on the policies that are causing this situation.

**Josh is the National Coordinator - Catholic Alliance for People Seeking
Asylum**

Another calendar item: a fundraiser for BASP.



Annual Trivia Night will be held on Friday 23 August at 7.30 in
St. Mary's Parish Hall, Holyrood St. Hampton
**\$25 per person. Come and join a table or make a table of 8-10
people.**
BYO food and drinks. Tea and Coffee provided.

Contact: Colette 9598 7329 or colfoxw@gmail.com

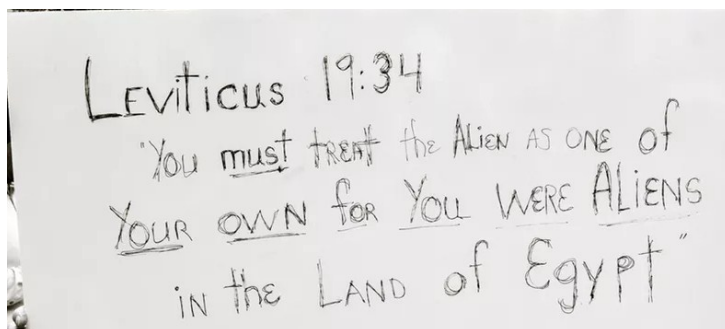
Does religion make any difference to a new Government led by Scott Morrison?

We know that many good people help their fellow humans whenever and in whatever ways they can, and our supporters include people from many different faith traditions and none. The wider community of those involved in helping refugees and asylum seekers include interfaith groups who work together and secular groups doing the same work. So does the religion of the new Prime Minister matter?

Since Scott Morrison became prime minister last month, much has been made about his religious beliefs and the impact they are likely to have on his leadership. The Prime Minister claims that he keeps his religion separate from his politics. That is probably impossible. Religion is part of culture and identity and, as such, at least partly informs our values and beliefs. We do have to be nuanced in our reactions to a person's religion because often the populist understanding of what a religion teaches is not actually what the adherents of that religion hold.

Scott Morrison is a member of one of the Pentecostal churches. As such he believes more in a direct personal experience of the power of God to heal, guide and transform lives than an intellectual assent to certain truths. Most Pentecostals believe in a literal interpretation of the Bible. His oft-repeated mantra "a fair go for those who have a go," while reflecting Pentecostal pragmatism, also suggests a viewpoint that only those who contribute financially to the country should reap the rewards of lower taxation.

The idea of **welcoming the stranger** is central to Christianity, Judaism and Islam. It originally arose from cultures born in deserts where leaving someone outside the city gates could be a death sentence. Religious leaders of those faiths often connect that ethic to a responsibility to shield refugees and other immigrants from violence and oppression.



More recently, some conservative Christian groups have begun to lobby for closing borders and not accepting migrants from refugee producing countries. This is a break from the past. Scott Morrison appears part of this break. We have had the experience of his being a very hard line Immigration Minister. Any statements he has made in this first part of his leadership do not give us much joy. In particular his vow to undo the Medivac Bill seems very harsh and unnecessary.

Violent conflicts and social unrest in the Middle East, in Central Asia, and in Africa have led to growing numbers of persons seeking refuge around the world in the past decades. In Australia, the religion of refugees has become a source of fears in both the public and political discourse. Particularly since 9/11 this is true of Muslims. The majority of the refugees who arrived in recent years originate from predominantly Muslim countries in the Middle East and Asia (eg. Afghanistan, Iraq, and Syria) and from Africa (eg. Nigeria and Somalia). The current government rhetoric does not give Muslims here much hope!

People in leadership have an obligation to tell us what the underlying beliefs are that shape their approach to policies and directions for the country. We believe it is incumbent on all of us to ask both major political parties why they are maintaining the most cruel practices towards refugees and asylum seekers in the developed world.

EMPLOYMENT

For those with work rights and the ability to work, employment is often hard to come by. BASP has trialled a Work Experience program where a BASP supporter offers an opportunity for an asylum seeker to do 3 or 4 visits to clean or garden, and where BASP can pay from a fund to support employment. This gives the person seeking asylum a chance to gain experience in an Australian context and to have a local reference if they are able to perform the tasks as needed. This has had a low take-up but has been positive for the participants and enables BASP to give a recommendation, based on real experience.

A vital question

When recently preparing a woman from the Middle East for an upcoming job interview I asked

"and what questions do you have about this job?"

The answer was ... "None"

I asked 'No questions?'

.....No from where I come from, you should never ask questions - it looks pushy and you won't get the job.

Ah, I said in Australia if you don't ask questions it shows you are not interested!

Understanding cultural differences is so very important.

Are there enough jobs?

On paper there might be nearly full employment and therefore jobs should be plentifulbut our experience is very different!!

Recently Dej a mature and experienced driver with very good English applied for a cleaning job in a warehouse . He went well in the interview and they rang me and conducted a 20 minute reference check over the phone.

'So will he get the job' I asked? Well I was toldhe has to do two more interviews, with the foreman and the manager.' Not easy even to get the jobs that are there!

On the brighter side: Two of our men have been employed at a timber yard - on a full time basis.



[Marian Steele—for BASP]

For many the suffering continues

For most people seeking asylum, the trauma is not over when they arrive in Australia. A young man we have in BASP accommodation and to whom we continue to give some support rang to say his brother had disappeared back in the country he had escaped from and his girlfriend had been taken in by police and warned that she had to give any information about him that she had. As a consequence the young woman's family said his name was never to be mentioned in their household again.

It is so important for these young men to have someone to talk to. Imagine being in a new country and having your father and girlfriend ring with this news and just be isolated.

Can we press the re-set button: We need a new language of compassion and inclusion

It was so notable after the attack on the mosques in Christchurch, that the language of compassion and inclusion used by New Zealand Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern was so evocative and resonated with so many people right around the world. She deliberately chose not to give oxygen to the perpetrator and his hateful views. Prime Minister Ardern well understands the role hate speech plays in dividing communities by demonising people of different races and religions.

Unfortunately our own PM, when given the chance to press the re-set button and choose a discourse of compassion and inclusion, chose not to. In an extended interview with Waleed Aly on Channel 9's *The Project*, Mr Morrison continued his derisive attacks on asylum seekers, and refused to commit to putting One Nation last on ballot papers in the upcoming Federal election (Channel 9, 2019).

Language plays an important role in public life. The words we choose and the ideas they invoke are not neutral, they do particular political work. Writers, orators, politicians have long known and exploited this. In the hands of those in charge, language constructs a narrative that serves the people who write the script. The discourse on asylum seekers over the years, particularly since Tampa, is full of examples of how this works. Think 'illegal boat people', 'children overboard,' 'queue jumpers' for instance.

The current Government is no stranger to divisive and hateful speech. As Laura Tingle notes, while 'Scott Morrison said all the right things after the Christchurch attacks', he 'has a history of low shots' (22/3/19). Tingle points, for example, to Morrison's questioning of public funds being used to fly families to Sydney to attend funerals of loved ones killed in the horrific shipwreck off Christmas Island in 2010. Morrison's comments on this were made in a party meeting, and so outraged many of his colleagues, they leaked it.

In the Channel 9 interview, the PM denied he made these comments, yet given the chance to make a clear statement that to exploit public sentiment in that way was completely unacceptable, he chose not to. Instead he made another 'low shot' with unsupported claims about asylum seekers and comments about '...these fears in the community' about Islam, fears which his language is cultivating.



Scott Morrison denied he, or the Liberal Party 'as a group' is Islamophobic yet stated the Party is made up of individuals and that, 'It's not for the Party to answer for every single member on every occasion'. As Prime Minister, leader of the Liberal Party and the Coalition Government, one has to ask why he should not expect every single member of his Government to answer for inflammatory or hateful speech.

Political leaders need to press the re-set button and call an end to decades of a deteriorating and racist public discourse-on Islam, Muslims, and on asylum seekers, and speak a new discourse of compassion, inclusion, and love.

Do you know:

- **People being sent from Nauru to the US have to pay for fares \$12000 for a family with a couple of children**

A visit to Mojgan in Iran

[Maree Tierney written after her recent visit to Iran]

Many BASP members who visited the MITA detention centre between 2014-2017 will remember our lovely friend Mojgan and her husband Hassan from Iran. In 2017 Mojgan went home to Iran to be with her husband who was then in jail in Iran after four years in detention in Australia seeking asylum. My husband and I promised Mojgan we would come to visit one day. Hassan has been released from jail and in March, they greeted us at the airport in Tehran.

(Mojgan is very happy living in an apartment block with most of her extended family especially her beloved parents. Like so many others, Mojgan suffered PTSD and her recovery was slow. Her family is not aware that she spent so long in our detention system because she did not want to distress them. It took her well over a year to recover and be able to welcome visitors and move fully back into her old life.)

We stayed in Mojgan's home in Tehran then set off to Yazd, Esfahan and Kashan. Hassan did all the driving as the roads are hair raising! Staying with the family meant we were able to experience life in Iran as the locals do. Despite their generous hospitality and Mojgan's great cooking, we could see that it is a difficult life. One

example was that due to sanctions, the Iranians must eat only what is available seasonally. They import very little food and the cost would be prohibitive for most people. Last year potatoes and onions cost 700 tumacs a kg; this year they are 18,000 tumacs. When basics become expensive people get desperate. Inflation is rife. Now that sanctions have been reinstated, queues of hundreds of people waiting to buy chicken that has arrived at the market is not uncommon.

We arrived in Tehran for Iran's New Year's Eve and witnessed the spectacle of 12 million people all setting off fireworks on the rooftop of their apartments. It was loud and crazy, the young men down in the street set alight huge bonfires.

All to herald the hope of a better year ahead, in 1398 (Iranian time).

Our journey to Yazd, the old mud lathered city of 400,000 was beautiful. Some ancient buildings are washing away but most are well maintained and people live in the traditional mud brick with tall wind tunnels constructed to catch any breeze to cool their homes.

Esfahan is a more modern city with spectacular architecture and markets that wind for miles throughout the city. Kashan has many world heritage listed historic homes set around beautifully decorated courtyards. The nougat (Gaz), the dizi, the biryani, the tadik, the kebabs, koresh-e-karaf, the Gormeh Sabzi... the food was yum- mostly vegetarian and delicious food to try in every city.

Travelling with locals made our time so exciting because we could explore more freely and get a sense of people's lives. It seems at any time, night or day, that half the population are outdoors on the streets and there is a constant soundtrack of music, particularly at this time when the country has a ten day holiday for New Year and everyone travels to visit their family. It is not an easy life but the strength of family bonds is immense and a source of joy. Many people approached us and talked about their fear for their children's future but they also wanted to know if we are impressed by their country and their towns. There is a real pride in being from one of the oldest cultures in the world. Mojgan and Hassan are back home and making the best they can out of life.

Mojgan still has great affection for all the volunteers and visitors who became her friends whilst she was in Australia - and she looked after us wonderfully!



A BASP volunteer wrote about a young boy in a family here seeking protection. Slow progress (but progress, nevertheless, I hope) is happening with Yasin. We have been doing maths, reading, spelling, pronunciation and now science (where, of all things, Newton's laws of motion, which he is doing in class, are definitely still a bridge too far for Yasin). But the minor highlight has been his interest in learning to write. I have today set him the very old-fashioned writing exercise of practising over the next week "The quick brown fox jumps over the lazy dog". He was taken enough with the fact that this sentence of a mere 35 letters contains all 26 letters of the alphabet to call his mother and inform her of same. I took that as a small sign of enthusiasm.

Housing

There is an unprecedented increase in the need for housing and daily living support. The income support Status Resolution Support Services (SRSS), which is 89% of Newstart has been cut for many asylum seekers who previously received it. This and the long delay in the visa process has meant many are facing homelessness and others cannot make ends meet. Many do not have work rights or if they do, may not have the health, language or skills to secure a job.

BASP is hopeful that this crisis will ease over the next 2 years as the backlog of claims are determined.

In the meantime, BASP is seeking increased donations so it can primarily extend its housing and daily living cover for those without income, without the permission or ability to work and/ or have up to a 2 year wait for their visa determination.

There are insufficient resources in the refugee sector currently to address the needs of these asylum seekers. BASP gives money to people with no money, to assist with basic needs of food, Myki, phone and other unexpected crises. BASP houses people in donated houses, BASP rented houses, with community hosts as well as paying the rent for people in their own rental properties and for short term accommodation in hostels or motels. Rental for a family is between \$350-370 pw; for an individual is \$150 pw. Money for basic living ranges from \$100 pw for an individual to \$200 pw for a family, as well as donated food. **Currently, BASP is assisting 129 people with housing per month.**

Where feasible, BASP is working with those who have been in its housing while getting on their feet, to move into private rental and be self sufficient. Some are not in a position to do this.

BASP has been able to take up the rent of several families recently, ensuring that these people can remain in the communities where they have established contacts and continue to exist while they have the long wait for a visa determination.

BASP has been working with a young man, living in his car and feeling at the end of his tether. His mental health issues prevent him from sharing with others. BASP was able to secure a one bedroom unit through Biggin and Scott Sunshine, an agent which is very supportive of the people we work with. We have watched him and his health improve since being there and he says, BASP 'has saved his life' Special thanks to Marg Fyfe for her support. of him.



A friend sent us this photo of a sculpture: a figure reclining outside St James church in Sydney (the 1st non indigenous place of worship in Sydney/Australia). He wrote: I was deeply impressed by it and felt that it epitomises the need to see beyond the stereotype and to recognise the individual humanity and soul and especially when dealing with those in need of refuge.

While many of us—asylum seeker and BASP supporters alike- are feeling despondent following the election, we need to continue our support and to highlight the many positives we see and hear about.



How welcoming Australians have been to a 17 year old from Kenya who arrived just over a year ago. He initially stayed in Melbourne with a couple who offered their spare room at short notice and had him for 3 months. They provided invaluable support and orientation to Australia. Through his sporting interest, he met a family in Warrnambool where he moved. Their recent report is a joy to read: “He was signed up to start as an apprentice mechanic this week. He has his learner permit and is doing really well.

Also, his work has gifted him a Mazda 3 which is also a manual. We have had some hairy moments but considering he has never sat in a car before he came to Australia he is doing amazing.

As I write to you, my wife and I are enjoying a wine whilst he is preparing us an authentic African meal with Okra which he found this week. We are so blessed.”

From Damien, a volunteer who has made a real difference to a family from Bangladesh. “This photo is the 9 year old daughter Zara. She was initially bullied at school as the main influencer was jealous of the attention she was getting. No one was brave enough to play with her in 1st few months of school. Once teachers / parents understood the issue, the bully was made to apologise and now Zara has lots of friends - such to the extent she was voted into the SRC last week. The mother just sent me this photo as a thank you from Zara for the chocolate I bought for her.



When the situation looks gloomy, community goodwill does lift our spirits. A young woman from Cameroon had a terrible tooth ache for weeks. The Dental Hospital gave her an appointment in 20 days. She felt desperate.

A dentist in Sandringham has offered and helped others in the past. He made a time available the next day and resolved the issue.

Our friend’s response: 'I can finally sleep peacefully. Thank you very much for helping me.'

Brigid and Libby were delighted to be able to attend the baptism of these twins born a year earlier. The family live in a house made available by Star of The Sea in Gardenvale and the baptism was at St James Church next door.

Jane has developed a significant group of friends through BASP, the school and the parish and many were there to join in this important event in the



In March 2019, a group of young Australian women took 3 young asylum seekers from the Middle East to La La Falls and the Redwood Forest near Warburton for a day’s hiking and friendship. These 3 women are from desert areas and the experience was eye opening and greatly enjoyed. Many thanks to Sara for organising this wonderful event.



On the Palm Sunday walk—Julie Francis, our BASP Board Chair with Libby and Anani (Libby’s grandson).





Betlehem had spoken to David Manne many times on the phone. While on Nauru he had not only been her lawyer but had been one of the friends in Australia who comforted her. On the Palm Sunday walk, Bethlehem suddenly realised she was a few metres away from him. She edged over to David as the walk progressed and then made herself known. It was an amazingly touching moment. Such is the power of human relationships forged in the most unlikely of circumstances.

In April a number of women in the Mariana Community again hosted a weekend at their beautiful rural house at Millgrove. 2 families went – one from Bangladesh and one from Pakistan - both a mother and 2 girls. So many of those seeking asylum are able to just subsist and are sad that they can't give their children fun experiences. This weekend did allow this. "Thank you very much to give us the opportunity . We enjoy a lot . It was really a great weekend we spend wonderful time with nature . And I loved the company of community workers . It was so nice to spend time with then . It's really a pleasure."

A new volunteer gave us her feedback and early impressions after visiting a family, eager to have some social contact. "I met the adult daughter and her parents this morning.

I was there for about two and a half hours, and the mum wants me to stay for lunch next time.

I have committed to driving them to the Eye & Ear hospital for his next appointment, when they know the time.

The mum speaks quite good English. She got a bit upset when talking of their time on Nauru, and I was sorry to cause that, but it is her story. They have done it all - Jakarta, boat to Christmas Is, Nauru for years, Adelaide-Darwin-Melbourne in detention. They have/ are being treated so badly. The really awful part is that they still have no certainty" and this was before the election!

From the Volunteer Organiser of the Colostomy Association of Victoria, which relies on volunteers to run their operation. "Life at the CAV is going really well. Without our dedicated BASP volunteers (these are all asylum seekers), the CAV would definitely be struggling to provide our 2600 estimated members the service we so proudly provide.

M is a star! She is tireless and is developing her skills each week. She is now keen to contact suppliers and discuss "stock issues" with their reps. Her leadership skills are also developing as she "manages" her team of 4, all of whom are performing brilliantly!

I cannot understand why D has not yet found employment? Such a well presented, polite man, a good listener and quick learner – you'd know better than I; are the jobs just not out there or are employers prejudiced?

A is "flourishing". As soon as he gets working rights he'll be on some roster within a week and within a year he'll be in management!

ALL the non-BASP CAV volunteers repeatedly comment on how polite and friendly all the BASP volunteers are. Mia loves Ds "bless you" each morning.'

Received with some gifts for asylum seekers from a young student.

Hello!

My name is Dimi, I am 13 years old and I live in a small place called Kurrimine Beach.

Eventhough I will never fully understand your situation and emotions, I just want you to know that you are very brave and inspiring. Keep your head up high and stay strong.

Good Luck



Nerida Thompson is an artist who contacted BASP and offered us this art piece she has created, wanting it to be in a public space and seen by many.

BASP was pleased to have this evocative piece in the Brigidine Ministry Centre, reminding visitors to the centre the trauma that people who came by boat have had to experience in seeking asylum. The notes below are from Nerida.

Name of art: Cast Away

Artist: Nerida Thompson

This artwork came from Listening to the song Cast Away from the musical Notre Dame de Paris by Garou and Richard Cocciante. This song made me think of all the displaced people in the world who, fleeing persecution and war, only find themselves in some form of gaol, be that refugee camp, detention centre or just racism. For many people the place they are fleeing is terrible and here I have left it ambiguous—is it a gun, is it a pipe?

What became important to me when painting this artwork was to show the individual person because when we see people as individuals and not problems it changes our perspective.

BASP hosted a pre-wedding afternoon tea to wish Ubah, pictured, much happiness ahead. Ubah has lived in a BASP house. since arriving over a year ago with little English and very fearful of her new surroundings. We have enjoyed watching her English improve and her confidence grow.



BASP assists as many people as it can with the funds it receives from BASP supporters. It also works to help people become self sufficient wherever this is feasible. This is for their sake and dignity and also for ensuring our resources are allocated as much as possible to those in urgent need. It was therefore most heartening to hear that after 16 months of providing a 56 year old woman with a weekly allowance (because no government assistance was available while her protection application is in process), she has been employed by a parish to do the weekly cleaning and this covers her own needs. This is a huge and positive step for a woman who could barely function when BASP first met her.

The Christchurch Shootings had a profound impact on many and also, in the aftermath, showed what a compassionate leader, Jacinda Ardern is. By coincidence the Victorian Islamic Community had its mosques and museum opened that weekend, allowing many non Muslims to attend and in that small way pay respects for such an atrocity as well as learning more about Islam. Libby attended the Islamic Museum of Victoria which is based at 15A Anderson Rd Thornbury and was part of a guided tour. Shireen, an Australian Muslim woman conducted this. What a wonderful experience it was- informative, myth busting and done with such grace when their community was so shattered. A visit is highly recommended.

The 2 young men with Brigid arrived recently at our office with boxes of food for our pantry. Neither were asylum seekers and the man in the middle has been in Australia for 8 years studying at secondary then tertiary level and is returning now to Cambodia. He asked his friends to donate towards this collection as his farewell gift to the Australians who had been good to him. A much appreciated and generous act.



Food is being distributed very quickly at present. We have a lot of calls.



Sugar , flour , cooking oil, Cans of fruit and tomatoes.

Long life milk, tea and coffee, cheese, honey, noodles, basmati rice, dates, jam

Gladwrap, tinfoil, pegs for hanging out washing,

Sweet and Savoury Biscuits, Snacks for school lunches, Salt and pepper, Spices: coriander, cinnamon, ginger,

Shampoo and Conditioner, Shaving Cream and shavers, Toothpaste. Soap, deodorants

Toilet paper

We seemingly never have enough washing powder, dish washing detergents and household cleaning products.



We have enough cans of beans, tinned soup, beetroot and corn. We are also well stoked with nappies for new borns.

Vouchers are really appreciated eg. for Coles, Big W, Kmart or similar stores; this allows individuals and families the independence to buy something they really want and need.

For anyone wishing to make a donation, the Project Bank details are: Brigidine Asylum Seekers Trust
Account: bsb: 083-004; a/c: 56-924-6603; NAB.

Please put your name on the entry and if possible send us a message so that we can send you a receipt. This could be a text message on 0438 001 515 or an email to jcaldwell@basp.org.au.



It seems like the beginning of a new uphill battle to get some alleviation of the difficulties and pain suffered by those seeking refugee status in this country. We had hoped a new Government would have introduced the changes they promised and then be more open to making us all feel prouder of welcoming those asking for protection.



This was not to be. So now, as we noted at the beginning of this newsletter, we need to make appeals to those who have decision making power and those who have influence with decision makers. If any of you know anyone in either of these categories could you please let us know.

As usual, thanks for your support—given to us in so many ways.

Brigid Arthur

Libby Saunders

(BASP Coordinators)