

STRENGTH AND KINDNESS

Brigidine Asylum Seekers Project (BASP)



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

Newsletter 104 December 2021

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

As we approach another Christmas, we ponder on the connection between Christmas and refugees. In our country, Christmas for many people, especially for children, is a wonderful time of the year. However, for those of us who experience the warm glow of being with family and enjoying a holiday and companionship, we recognize it is not like this for everyone. Indeed the original narrative does not paint this picture. The shepherds who gathered around "yon virgin and child." were dirty, unwashed, poor men who slept in the fields, apart from their wives if they were married. The wise men were foreigners who practiced astrology. The story jumps from the baby in a manger to a power hungry man ordering the slaughter of innocent children and Jesus' family fleeing for their lives to Egypt. What became of the family in Egypt? Presumably, they were immigrants who couldn't speak the language, unwanted refugees, homeless and poor, or cheap labor.

Children are dramatically over-represented among the world's refugees. UNHCR figures show that at least 82.4 million people around the world have been forced to flee their homes. Among them are nearly 26.4 million refugees, around half of whom are under the age of 18.

To be more local, among those supported by BASP, many children are in homes where parents struggle to pay their rent, utility bills, school books and other requisites and there is no money for outings or holidays that most of us see as normal enjoyments.

The children we at BASP think about, particularly at this time of the year, are those in families in many troubled places in the world whose fathers are in this country and whose only wish is for their children to be able to join them in this country. These men usually work long hours in back breaking jobs to send money home to their families. They talk about life being meaningless because of the separation from their children. They despair because there is no end to this situation in sight.

A narrative that saw these children as our equivalent to the child Jesus would perhaps lead to a different 2021 Christmas and beyond.



Donations to the Brigidine Asylum Seekers Project are tax deductible

The ongoing saga of Manus Island/PNG and Nauru and the people who are the ‘political pawns’ of this

It would be easy to despair when we think about the myriad of decisions that have been made and are still being made about people Australia has traded for political opportunism. We have no doubt that Nauru and Manus Island will be remembered in history as places where Australia has committed heinous crimes. People accused of no crime have been warehoused in appalling conditions in arbitrary and indefinite detention. The Governments of these two countries, for all sorts of complex reasons, have been in no position to refuse to cooperate.

We know that in total 4,183 people coming to Australia seeking protection have been sent to Nauru and PNG since the start of the offshore processing on 13 August 2012. By January 31st, 2021, about half of these (2,044) were in Australia. 1,219 of those in Australia had been brought here for medical treatment. The Australian Government considers their stay in Australia temporary.

Some of those brought for medical reasons (under the now repealed Medevac legislation), were detained in hotels (Kangaroo Point in Brisbane and Mantra Hotel in Melbourne) for more than 12 months, and few received the medical treatment they needed. Since December 2020 most of this group of 192 have been released into the community on Bridging Visas, but 36 men are still detained in the Park Hotel in Melbourne, and a few others are detained in other places of detention. They are still getting released a few at a time. It is beyond cruel to give a few of these men at a time the news “You can go now” and leave the others with no idea of why some are chosen and others not.

BASP is helping 30 of the Medivac men who were released at the beginning of 2021. For these men, in the first weeks of their release, accommodation was provided by two companies - AMES and LWB. Then they were expected to be self-sufficient. Of course they couldn't be.

Overall, these men have been very stressed – they had been in detention for 8 or 9 years. Our aim is to help them to adjust to life where they have freedom. This is a herculean ask for men who have had their every move monitored and determined for years, but we still have to hope that some ‘normal’ life is possible for them. Work is a very big step for them but, where possible, a necessary one. It is the way to learn how to manage time, money, relationships and gives a sense of purpose. Some have a job, are beginning to support themselves financially and relatively independent. Others are a long way away from this.



Some of the factors that have not helped these men include:

- Lock down in some ways meant a continuation of the isolation from the community that these men had experienced for so many years
- They have 6 month visas (unfortunately called Final Departure Bridging Visa E). This means they have no sense of security. Sometimes employers say to them ‘You only have a month to go. It is not worth taking you on.’ The first renewal of their visas was messy – but the second looks to be a more stream line process.

Recently, one of the men said “I went from being in detention thinking nobody in the is country liked me to being in the community and everyone is nice. I honestly believe that no country in the world would have done so much for me. I can't forget what the government has done to me but I will also always remember what I have been given by the people. And I am happy. I didn't think I would be happy again—but I am.” This man is Sudanese and he had just spent three days as part of the Sudanese diaspora offering solace to the family whose children tragically died in a house fire last week.

**You are all invited to the Brigidine Asylum Seekers
Project Christmas party on Sunday 19th December.**

Venue: 54 Beaconsfield Pde, Albert Park

Time: 5pm onwards

Because of COVID, we have not met for Christmas for the past two years. We want to resume our annual celebration with all



those part of the BASP community. It is a chance to meet other people who share a commitment to justice in this area as well as meet some of those who have been helped by the Project. It is also an opportunity for us to say

thank-you.

You are all important to us as we try together to build a safer and more just situation for asylum seekers.

We hope you can come in person, but realise it is likely that some people are still uneasy about attending social functions.

Because of unpredictable numbers perhaps you would let us know if you are coming.

RSPV: queries@basp.org.au

The Afghan story unfolds

A clearly distraught man comes to see us clutching a crumpled photocopied photo of his daughters. He explains each time ‘These are my daughters. They are in Kabul. They are in danger. I must help them.’ We have known this man for many years—and we listen helplessly.

It has been 3 months since Kabul was taken by the Taliban. Many people, including BASP, have been calling for

- family reunion for all those Afghan people who have family in Afghanistan or who have fled Afghanistan and in other countries
- At least 20,000 extra humanitarian places to allow as many visas as necessary to be issued
- permanent protection for Afghan refugees., many of whom are still on temporary visas in Australia. Most are Hasara and have been here for more than 8 years.

Meanwhile, **the Australian Government has done very little to help.**

Australia was very tardy in evacuating people from Afghanistan over the past couple of years when it became obvious that rescue efforts would be needed. The Trump administration announced a withdrawal of US forces by May 2020 even though it was obvious that the Taliban power was increasing. President Biden continued to support this same policy—eventually moving out of the country by August 31. It was clear that many people who had supported the US and their Allies (including Australia) would be in grave danger when this withdrawal occurred. There were calls from former diplomats and Australians who had worked in Afghanistan to give visas to former interpreters and staff of Australia's embassy. This did not happen.

When Kabul was taken over by the Taliban, some 4000 people were airlifted to safety in Australia. (Many of these were Australian citizens) There are dramatic stories of their having to go through a sewage filled canal to get to the gate that provided the entrance to the Hamid Karzai International Airport. A lot didn't make it.

Those Afghan people who escaped came on a Temporary 3 month Visa, part of the locally engaged employee (LEE) program. None have been given Permanent visas. Recently, their temporary visas were renewed for a year. However, they still have to go through the process of applying for protection in Australia. Probably about half of these are in Melbourne and are being resettled as part of the Humanitarian Program by AMES.

Since the fall of Kabul many Afghans who should be under the LEE program but didn't manage to get out of Afghanistan, have only been granted temporary visas, which run for three months at a time, leading to many refugees facing uncertainty over whether they will be able to get to Australia. It also means their visas could expire while they are still making their way to Australia.

We are told by Afghan people here in Australia that life in Afghanistan is really hard. Afghanistan is experiencing some of the worst food insecurity in the world. The high price as well as the scarcity of food, is a result of the long drought, floods and the instability caused by the Taliban takeover. The prices being paid for basic food has increased twenty-fold.

The plight of women in this situation is absolutely dire. They are facing total poverty, disenfranchisement and removal from the work force.



The ghosts of past conflicts. What is happening is just the last of a long line of withdrawal of foreign troops from Afghanistan

Twenty years since Tampa—and the results?

From the BASP point of view, it has been all down hill since then. We will just consider one element of what has happened and what needs to change.

Both major parties in our Government appear to have created a 'black hole' where quite large groups of people are just languishing. The processes and procedures to systematically and expeditiously move them out of this hole do not exist.



Spencer, *The Age*, 12 October 2001

The groups we identify are:

- Those on Bridging Visas requiring frequent renewal
- Those on 3year Temporary Protection Visas (TPV)
- Those on 5year Safe Haven Enterprise Visa (SHEV)
- Those who have no visas at all

As well, there are people waiting interminably because the whole system is clogged to the point of inertia:

- Some people have not had an initial interview after applying for protection as far back as 2012
- Those waiting for an appeal to this first decision or for or a Federal Court hearing (usually many years)
- Those waiting to be released from detention (can be over ten years)
- People whose Medicare has expired

Are people still being punished because they dared to come to Australia? In particular, dared to come on a boat? Is the Government simply saving money by not resourcing the relevant departments? Are successive Governments simply sending 'messages' to their respective electorates?

With the assistance of one of our friends from the academic world, we have been looking at how other countries, at different times, have 'regularized' the situation for specific groups of refugees. The US, most of Europe, Malaysia, and other countries have enacted dozens of such policies over the past forty years, regularizing millions of residents in the process. Programs (an amnesty and a regularization of status program) were initiated by Malcolm Fraser's government in 1976 and 1980 respectively. Bob Hawke gave 42,000 visas to Chinese students and Paul Keating simply made these into permanent visas without all the applications having to be dealt with one by one.

So, we argue Australia could 'regularize' the situation for the groups mentioned above. The aim would simply to grant them a permanent status which permits them to stay, to work, to reunite with family and to access public services such as health and education.

This regularising of their current status would enable people to contribute to Australia at a time when they are sorely needed, especially in the labour market. This one-off approach regularises those people who are on a complicated range of visas with different conditions and which require constant updating and attention from government officers. Some people have no visas and no rights to work, whereas some are waiting years for renewal. This burdensome process has not been a success and this solution is effective and straightforward. It would result in working refugees paying taxes and helping to build the economy in the way that so many migrants and refugees have in the past.

Regularised refugees would be able to work with dignity and contribute to the payment for social security, health and education. They and their families would also benefit from access to social security, health and education.

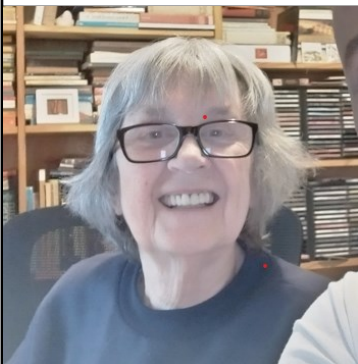
This once-off regularisation programme has the political advantage of taking these issues off the political agenda by allocating regular residence status to refugees in Australia.

BASP Legal help

The way BASP usually helps to get legal advice for people seeking asylum, is to refer them to the legal groups offering free assistance—groups such as Refugee Legal, ASRS, Victorian Legal Aid—and we have great faith in the work done by these organisations. However, over the years we have one valiant migration agent who has followed through on some of the most difficult cases with painstaking care—and has succeeded in getting a just and fair outcome for many. Her name is Judy



Dixon. She has been an amazing volunteer for BASP for many many years.



While the matters may take years to finalise, Judy has considerable success in a range of matters, including family reunion, humanitarian visas, renewal of Temporary Protection Visas, Medicare renewals, AAT hearings, FOI and Ministerial Intervention requests. The Iraqi family (pictured) were in Turkey for many years before arriving in Melbourne with a visa, thanks to Judy's efforts. She is a true advocate for those she represents.



Other help from pro bono lawyers/ migration agents

We recognize and are also grateful for the legal help provided by others we call on—one in particular who has also helped our folk over many years is Franco Delmonaco.

How much can we look to the law to change the situation for people seeking asylum in Australia today?

As non-lawyers, we see the legal profession making valiant efforts to find a way to enable just and humane decisions affecting the lives of people seeking protection in Australia. As various changes have been made to the Migration Act 1958 this has become increasingly difficult.

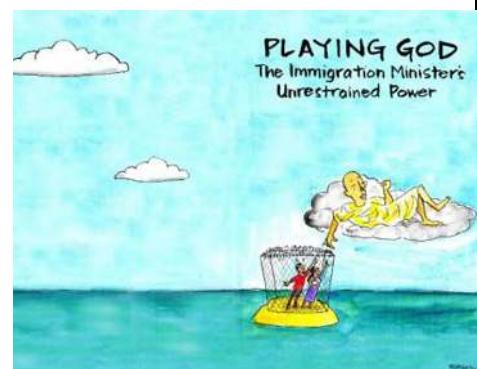
One of the major aspects of the current act that needs change is the personal powers that now reside with the Immigration Minister. One of the Immigration Ministers, Chris Evans, said he was very uncomfortable with the God-like powers entrusted to the role.

The personal Ministerial powers are

- non-compellable – i.e., you can't force the Minister to make a decision or even consider the case.

- Non-delegable – i.e., only one of the Home Affairs portfolio ministers can make the decision

This means that thousands of people in Australia are waiting (interminably) for the Minister to 'lift the bar' - that is allow an asylum seeker to proceed with their case. Many are 'stuck' indefinitely because the Minister does not take this step.



BASP would like to

- Abolish all Ministerial personal powers other than those that can be used to positively intervene in exceptional cases.
- Shift these decision-making responsibilities from the Minister to public officials and make them open, transparent, compellable and reviewable.



One man's persistence and courage: from Saudi Arabia to Geelong

Sulyman response to “How are things going?” is “Perfect”. “Do you have enough things for the house?” “More than enough”. He is about the most cheerful person we know.

Sulyman was born and grew up in Saudi Arabia. His grandparents came from Chad but neither he nor his parents had been to Chad. So, effectively, he was stateless. As were his wife (Aisha) and children (Jouseff, Moussa and Sulyman and Abdul Aziz). None had any rights in Saudi Arabia. The children were not allowed to go to school and any work Suleyman did was illegal.



A house in Geelong—“perfect”

Sulyman came to Australia in 2011 Suleyman, Aisha and Abdul Aziz to try to find a place where his family could be free.

He proceeded to work extraordinarily hard to establish himself. He is a vegetarian but, because the jobs available were in meat works, he went from one to another to maintain constant work! Most of the time he has worked two jobs at the same time—occasionally three.

Over the ensuing years, our volunteer Migration agent, Judy Dixon, has gone through a myriad of ‘hoops’ to get his family to join him..

Sulyman had left his wife and three month old baby and three older sons (these were the children of his first wife who died). Just lately after years of applications and rejections and further applications, Aisha and Abdul Aziz were given visas to come. They arrived a couple of weeks ago, and after quarantine, they spent a miraculous few days doing things they had never done before—visiting Luna Park, the markets and the beach.

The ongoing saga of the three sons getting visas is the stuff of movies! One of the young men, Sulyman, did not apply to come to Australia because someone had to stay and look after their grandmother. This lady then decided she wanted to go back to Chad. She did this and shortly afterwards she died. Then the second young man, Moussa, was deported to Chad—where he had never been because he was trying to learn to drive to get a job and as an illegal person he was not allowed to drive. Youseff, the last of the three, had to go to Chad to renew his passport—needed to come to Australia and then he could not return to Saudi Arabia. So all three brothers have been stuck in Chad—trying to learn French because they do not know the Chad language. Just recently, Jouseff actually got a visa and he is to arrive in Melbourne this week.

Two great people who are friends of ours, Anne and Len Monk who live in Geelong, came to the rescue in helping navigate a school for Aziz and some English for Aisha.

There seems a degree of synchronicity in the help Sulyman got from Jeanette Shopland's family. Jeanette was a long time advocate and friend of asylum seekers—in particular a group of young men from Sri Lanka. She continued to support these young men and their families in all the ups and owns of having to return to Sri Lanka.

Jeanette was a great supporter of BASP. After quite a long illness (which never stopped her helping asylum seekers) Jeanette died in September this year. Her family offered a lot of the furniture from her house to BASP—just at the time when Sulyman's family arrived. We know how pleased Jeanette would have been about this.

We use this opportunity to acknowledge the amazing assistance of Jeanette —particularly to the young men she befriended back in immigration detention in 2002 and her subsequent help to them and their families. We also pay our respect to Jeanette for all of the help she gave to BASP over many years.

Housing

Since the last newsletter, a further 4 men have been released from hotel detention, placed in 3 week transition housing until they find something in the community.

Fortunately, BASP was able to offer accommodation to all 4. Timing is everything sometimes and as these men needed housing, 2 supporters offered us a one and a 2 bedroom unit at lower than market rent. This enabled the 2 Rohingya men to share together and another man, desperate to be alone. The 4th was offered a room in with men released earlier whom he knew, but has decided to move interstate with friends.

The request for living alone is a difficult one to meet, even though a few of the men in this cohort feel they need this in order to heal after 8/9 years sharing with others. Again, we were fortunate that Catholic Care called for a suitable person for a unit they had in Box Hill for 9 months. It enabled one man to move there on his own for that period, which will give him the space he needs to start his recovery process.

We sometimes also need to move people if the shared arrangement is not working. One man was unable to sleep given the hours his house mates kept and the layout of the house, making it noisy at night. We were able to move him to another place. He sent us this message “Hi I hope you are well.... thank you so much for helping. Now I can sleep properly and I’m so relax ..since I move to new house I’m feeling like I’m coming to paradise...I’m very thankful..□”

BASP continues to get referrals for housing and assists wherever possible. However, there are some people whose needs we are unable to satisfactorily meet. Among these are people, mainly males in referrals, who have acute mental health issues and who need supervised, skilled supervision as well as housing. One young man was brought to BASP on the Friday afternoon of a long weekend, just released from a mental health facility, to be accommodated. Knowing little about him and it being late in the day, we agreed to assist him with motel accommodation over the weekend and revisit after that. By the Sunday, the motel had called the police for the young man’s protection as he was clearly unwell, accosting other guests and walking into the traffic outside. He was returned to hospital for more care.

We also received referrals for older women, with no English, mental health conditions and who were in crisis accommodation. Without ethnic specific services which include people seeking asylum, there is little available for these folk.

BASP was fortunate to have moved some men out of a shared house into other options just as we received a request to house a woman with a toddler and who was 39 weeks pregnant. She had experienced domestic violence and was very much alone. Within a week of moving into the house, the baby was on its way so 2 ambulances arrived. One to take her to hospital for a delivery, which occurred within 2 hours. The other to remain with the toddler until we could make arrangements. We contacted a delightful Ethiopian woman, who lived in one of our houses nearby. She dropped what she was doing and went there immediately, enabling the 2nd ambulance to leave. BASP then arrived and took the toddler to familiar people who cared for her while the mother was in hospital.

It was lovely to see the Ethiopian woman step up so willingly, show real caring for the little girl and enjoying being on the giving, rather than receiving end. She is now working and is moving from a BASP house to a self-contained unit which has been made available by a BASP supporter.

BASP continues to support an average of 260 people a month with housing, through the housing it manages—as well as by paying people’s rents when they have no income.

We are nervous about next year as the Extreme Hardship program initiated by the State Government to help people without income over the Covid period, is finishing this month. This program has given the capacity for many asylum seekers to at least partially support themselves.



Lateral thinking: from a couple of great people who manage the garden in our house for women in Albert Park

Dear Brigid, just checking with you if it would be ok for Penny(mostly) and me to participate in raising native tree seeds at the cottage garden as part of a project to supply small seedlings to be made available where needed throughout Victoria. It would just entail us raising the seedlings in tubes in boxes on the tables down near the garbage containers until they are ready for distribution .

Kate

A woman and her adult brother have struggled with poor health, no income and an inability to pay their way for several years. We were able to move them into a house in West Heidelberg, made available through Harry Prout, a Marist brother. The rent is minimal and is being covered by St Dominic’s Camberwell. With the weight of seeking rent and bill cover each month now removed from her shoulders, she has shone. When they had the agent’s regular inspection, she had gifts for them, saying “we might be poor but we are still generous.” She then totally surprised us recently, by saying she has secured a casual dishwashing job in a restaurant. Such an achievement would not have seemed possible a year ago, when she was preoccupied with seeking financial assistance. Bravo to her!

Since June this year we have been paying rent for a woman and her son. She arrived by boat with her husband in 2012/3 and her husband drowned in 2019, leaving her alone with their then 3 year old. Her benefits were stopped in May 2021 and she was desperate.

She emailed her thanks this week, after having her visa application determined and getting a SHEV (Safe Haven Enterprise Visa). This acknowledges she is a refugee but is for 5 years, rather than permanent, because she arrived by boat. At least she will now be entitled to Centrelink, while she settles her son into school in 2022 and then looks for work within school hours.

Recently, a young newly graduated teacher sent a donation to BASP. In her message she explained that the teacher suggested that instead of giving her a present she made the gift to BASP.

They say its hard to get Santa Klaus people this year because of COVID. So here is Mounib, one of our folk—he looks the part at a Salvos function! He doesn’t have work rights but he can bring some cheer .

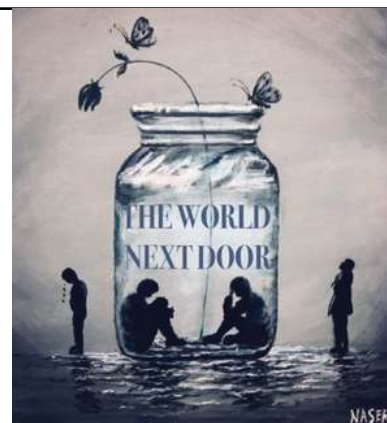


Art Exhibition—the World Next Door

Naser Moradi is an Afghan man who has been in the Melbourne Immigration Transit Accommodation (MITA) for the past eight years. He is a self taught artist. Brigid remembers when he was just playing around with very simple drawings to fill in the time. He has been prolific in the number of paintings he has done—giving many away.



At this exhibition organized by the Mercy Hub, Naser spoke on the screen and he was so accepting, so grateful and in fact so inspirational. His major message to everyone is about the need for understanding and peace—and he has obviously pondered deeply about freedom. *“From behind the razor wire fences I wonder: Are the gardens so green? Is the city so tall? Is everything as I dream it can be?”*



We know Naser’s story and it is impossible not to just shake ones head and wonder “Why”.



Thanks so much Jason for this donation – and the story behind it. That is indeed a creative project. Raising awareness in the community, providing some ‘light’ and helping in a practical way some asylum seekers.

My name is Jason and I create candles which I make available for sale, with all proceeds being donated to support refugee and humanitarian causes.

Each month I donate the proceeds to grassroots organisations which support refugees and asylum seekers. For this month, we have chosen to support BASP with a \$350 donation.

I am very pleased to make this donation, on behalf of the customers who have purchased the candles I make.

Thank you for everything you do to better the lives of those in need.

*Yours sincerely,
Jason Naumovski*



Some times things just work! (from Marian who helps us get jobs for people)

A few weeks ago my neighbor Sara asked whether I knew anyone who could be a dishwasher for her cafe Two Bob (<https://www.zomato.com/melbourne/two-bob-fitzroy-north>)

Luckily Rosane had just talked to us about getting a job and had some experience in hospitality.

So the very next day Rosanne had a try out, did really well and is now working five days a week!

With all the lockdowns its been very hard for any cafe...so if you are in the area of 70 Queens Parade, Fitzroy North, drop in at Two Bob for great coffee and cake or my favourite.. the Reuben toasted sandwich

Photo Libby and bride and groom Mirabel

Mirabel was referred to BASP in April 2018, recently arrived from Cameroon, where her life was in danger and her son was missing. She was seeking protection but had no work rights or income support. BASP arranged housing and linked her as a volunteer with the Colostomy Association of Victoria. She has assisted this organisation since August 2018 and has become a valuable member in ensuring their clients receive the supplies they need. In March 2020 she gained her work rights and planned to seek paid employment but this was hampered by Covid and the lockdowns. She recently called to say she was moving from BASP housing as she was getting married. She came to the office to return the key as she wanted to thank us in person, introduce her husband and show us her wedding photos. We are delighted for her and trust a decision regarding her visa will be made soon.



Recently one of BASP’s volunteers from several years ago wrote to say that their family were still sharing their home (many years later) with a refugee family. The family have three children and their hosts have assisted them get jobs and training.

Even more remarkably, part of the message was

I have spent quite a bit of time home schooling Sara who is now in grade three.

She has been a fantastic student and remained highly motivated all the way through the lockdowns.

Her reading is very good and she devours books at a great rate.

The two little boys, almost one and three, are a source of great joy and keep us on our toes and fully entertained.



Bill Wiglesworth never ceases to amaze us! His message:
More good news today. The rustic table I made from salvaged tank stand timber sold today at Castlemaine's Vintage Bazar for \$680. I'd like to think that my mention that BASP would benefit was a factor in persuading the buyer.

St Mary's of the Cross in Aspendale/Mordialloc held its second Silent Auction on-line to raise funds for BASP in October. They did a mighty job, raising \$6886 for BASP. Maree Morris led the team and said it was a wonderful community effort, with some people making things for it, others donating goods or money. **She would be pleased to share how they did it, if others wish to run something similar.**



Many schools support us in a variety of ways. The Principal, Luci Quinn from Clonard College in Geelong brought in a car load of groceries. Other schools regularly do this—and also help with hampers at Christmas time.

St Finbar's East Brighton has again been in touch, planning to donate hampers for BASP to distribute to individuals and families at Christmas. BASP gives them a list of names and family numbers/ages and parishioners choose one and prepares a hamper.



Ann Dalton, a supporter, recently won 2nd prize in the Eureka Street raffle. This was loads of Coles vouchers, which she brought in for the people we assist. Another supporter, also brought in much welcomed vouchers, having tried to convert his bank reward points into vouchers. If anyone knows how to do this, please let us know.

Win Win - we get calls for occasional work from our supporters and we are happy to link asylum seekers for this work if they have the required skills. We received this message from a satisfied supporter. " He came and worked very well for 4 hours. The garden is very much improved. Only one technical hitch, he left without his money! He did the edge of the nature strip and we were outside the front gate and since we are near the station I was giving him instructions on how to walk there (I had collected him in the car). when he took off. I said "Wait you haven't got your money ", he said" , No No" and walked even faster. He had asked me if I worked for BASP and I told that I supported and helped sometimes and he told me how wonderful you all were." BASP has supported this man for several years and he does feel he owes us a debt. We now have an arrangement that the person forwards the money to us, we pass it on to him and he can assist his family in Sri Lanka.

Acknowledgment

Kildare Ministries is the body responsible for the governance of ten schools and three community works—of which BASP is one. At the recent AGM of the BASP Board, the Trustees of Kildare Ministries paid tribute to our wonderful volunteers and donors!

They especially noted the generosity and commitment of those volunteers, who continued to work throughout the lockdowns as essential workers.

Our volunteers are our eyes, ears, arms and legs in many ways and BASP would be diminished without them.

We are grateful for any of the following food (or vouchers to buy food and household necessities).



We currently have enough tinned food except for cans of fruit and tomatoes.

The following are still very much appreciated:

Sugar, cooking oil, salt, pepper, tea, coffee

Herbs and spices

Blocks or individual wrapped cheese. Eggs.

Long life milk, **honey is a most appreciated food**, noodles, tuna, basmati rice, dates, jam (especially any red jam)

Gladwrap, tinfoil, pegs for hanging out washing,

Sweet and Savoury Biscuits, Snacks for school lunches (even when home!), Salt and pepper, Spices: coriander, cinnamon, ginger, Shampoo and Conditioner, Shaving Cream and shavers, Toothpaste and toothbrushes. Soap, deodorants

Garbage bags (small and large)



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

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 please email us at contact@basp.org.au after making a donation so we can send you a tax deductible receipt. We will send a newsletter but feel free to tell us that you don't want one.



It's the time of the year when a lot of us reflect on the year that's been.



Here at BASP we know that with your help we have done a lot. We continue to pay bills and give emergency relief money to many asylum seekers. In the last financial year, that support was \$1.2 million dollars (and that excludes the value of donated housing, donated food vouchers and goods and the time and energy of volunteers). For a small group relying totally on donations that is quite amazing—even if we say so ourselves! So many of you have contributed to a better situation for people seeking protection in this country.

However, on the downside, we have not changed the Governments policies that continue to alienate and impoverish so many. We still have people with no income and many with family stuck in really dangerous circumstances overseas. Our absolute hope is that this will change in 2022.

We wish you all a happy Christmas and a next year that is full of love and kindness. May you all, with your families, enjoy peace and happiness.

Brigid Arthur

Libby Saunders

(BASP Coordinators)