

STRENGTH AND KINDNESS
Brigidine Asylum Seekers Project (BASP)



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

Newsletter 121 August 2025

The Project aims to:

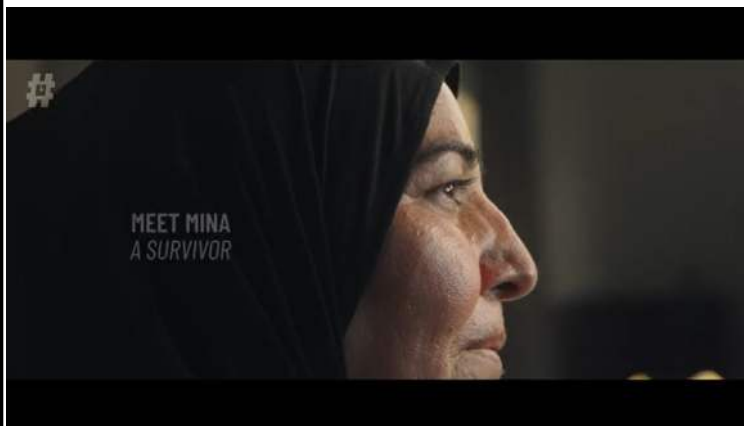
- * provide hospitality and practical support for people seeking asylum
- * actively network with like-minded individuals and groups who are working for justice for asylum seekers
- * promote advocacy for the rights of asylum seekers
- * raise awareness of asylum seeker issues and concerns through a range of activities

Martin Luther King Jr. said, *"In the end, we will remember not the words of our enemies, but the silence of our friends."* BASP has always tried to advocate for change at the same time as give practical support to those seeking protection in our country.

There are campaigns being organised to try to get the Government to change legislation where necessary, regulations where this is all that is needed, and to ensure that Australia becomes known as a humane and kind country.

One is being organised by the Australian Churches Refugee Taskforce (ACRT) and Common Grace. The ACRT is an initiative of the National Council of Churches in Australia (NCCA), established in early 2013. It aims to promote a shared Christian vision of compassion and hospitality towards asylum seekers and refugees in Australia. The Taskforce is supported by the NCCA and its members include leaders from various Christian denominations and ecumenical bodies. Brigid has been a member of the ACRT since its inception. Common Grace is a non-denominational organisation with a Christian ethos, dedicated to advocating around issues such as justice, healing and flourishing for First Nations people, climate justice, pursuing peace, restoration and welcome to asylum seekers. It also advocates for all households to be places of nurture, safety and support, where violence against women is eliminated.

Under the auspices of ACRT and assisted by Common Grace, the campaign is called #EndTheWaiting. Over 100 days, from August-early November, communities throughout the country are invited to hold a peaceful prayer vigil near MPs offices, praying for justice for people seeking asylum and calling to End The Waiting for thousands of people, who have sought safety on our shores but still remain in limbo, facing an uncertain future. In this newsletter we are including an invitation to join us in planning a vigil.



We are also working with another group, the Permanency and Resettlement group, to request the granting of permanent visas to those who have been waiting for ten years or more for permanent visas, hence making family reunion possible. By our next newsletter we hope to be able to enlist your support for this initiative.

Donations to the Brigidine Asylum Seekers Project are tax deductible



The Big Walk 4 Refugees

This year's Big Walk 4 Refugees was a great success. From 1-30 June, 52 teams across Australia joined the event, covering at least 43,233 kms on a virtual route from Tasmania around the whole of Australia to Christmas Island, Indonesia, PNG and Nauru, and finishing in Canberra.

This time, the BASP team were the biggest walkers of all — we had 40 members and did more than 4,550 kms (and that's not counting the steps walked but not recorded)!

Thank you and well done to everyone who took part by walking, organising or

donating, whether to BASP or any of the other brilliant teams.

The Big Walk is a good way to send a message to the government that it must make changes to the unjust laws and policies that are forcing asylum seekers into destitution or keeping them locked up here in Australia and offshore. Many immigration detention centres were on the route, highlighting the injustice and suffering brought about by the policy of indefinite mandatory detention.

One of the places the virtual walk visited was Nauru, where Australia continues to send asylum seekers who arrive by boat. The most recent available figures suggest that about 100 people are being held in indefinite detention there. They live under terrible conditions. A survey by the Asylum Seeker Resource Centre found that most suffer from physical health problems and more than one in five has a severe mental health condition.

Even though Australia has argued that what happens to those Nauru is not its responsibility and not within its jurisdiction, we know this is untrue. The UN Human Rights Committee said in a landmark ruling this year that no country, including Australia, can escape its human rights obligations by outsourcing asylum processing to another country.

Meanwhile, the ban on granting permanent protection to 'Unauthorised Maritime Arrivals' remains in effect. This leaves around 900 people stuck, people who were transferred back to Australia from Nauru and PNG and are living in the community on 'Final Departure' visas. Since resettlement arrangements with New Zealand, the USA and Canada are either finished or suspended, they have nowhere to go. This situation is beyond belief, especially considering that the majority are recognised refugees. Let our decision-makers know that we want an end to offshore processing and permanent protection for refugees who are being robbed of their futures.

A major issue is still work rights for all

We believe no-one should be denied work rights. It feels like starving people out! Currently some people are being granted Bridging Visas (BVs) with no work rights once they apply for Ministerial Intervention, apparently because they at some point been without a visa (and therefore 'unlawful'). This may have been only for a week in some cases days. And it seems often to have been a departmental issue. Apparently, this is a Regulation which the Department is enforcing.

Currently many people are being invited/urged to submit requests for Ministerial Intervention, this being the only pathway to permanency for people subject to Fast Track. However, it is highly problematic to then take away work rights; often people have been working for many years for the same employer, who has to terminate employment. Of course families and individuals quickly become destitute if unable to work to support themselves. With the demands on the Minister, our people maybe be waiting for a long time for a decision.

In a very recent example of this senseless injustice, Siva, a Sri Lankan man known to BASP for some time, had his work rights taken away when his bridging visa was renewed this month. Siva has been in Australia for over a decade and for most of that time he has had no visa at all. He has endured extreme mental suffering as a result of Australia's draconian immigration policies. Earlier this year, lawyers helped Siva to get a bridging visa with work rights. We saw the transformation in him as he managed to pick himself up and apply for jobs. He was successful in finding a good placement, but by this time there was only a month left on his three-month visa, and so the employer decided it wasn't worth giving him the job. Meanwhile, a month before Siva's visa was due to expire, the lawyers had duly applied for it to be renewed. However, Immigration issued the new visa **a day after** the expiry, which meant that for a day, Siva had been an 'unlawful non-citizen'. As a result, the new visa conditions state **No Work**.

Discussion Session

Wednesday, 20 August

2pm – 3.30pm

**St Joseph's Hall, 274 Rouse St, Port Melbourne (behind the
bluestone St Joseph's church)**

(note change from usual venue)

At this session we have the good fortune to be **joined by our local MP, Josh Burns** who has kindly agreed to share his insights and experience.

We will discuss and ask questions about how to bring about political change, and how the public and elected politicians can work together.

As a Member of Parliament, Josh was instrumental in pushing the government in 2021 to release the refugees transferred from offshore processing who were in indefinite detention, and he remains actively committed to fighting for dignity and respect for asylum seekers and refugees.

On this afternoon, we will be able to raise many of the urgent issues, such as the work rights issue, and the growing destitution among asylum seekers who have been in limbo for so long, with all the effects flowing on from that and how they can be addressed.

Also on the 20th, we will be talking about **a new campaign** organised by the Australian Churches Refugee Task Force (ACRT) called **#EndTheWaiting**

The campaign consists of vigils to be held in as many electorates as possible, calling for justice for asylum seekers, in particular the need for the government to provide a pathway to permanency for all those who have been failed by Australia's flawed asylum processes. We will spend some time outlining how a vigil might work—BASP will organize one (see below) and others might like to have a vigil in your own electorate.



BASP will be hosting our #EndTheWaiting vigil on Wednesday 3 September, 2025 at the Brigidine Ministry Centre, 54 Beaconsfield Parade, Albert Park. This will be a chance to see how a vigil could work (perhaps in another electorate!)

“For me, number one is safety. I am safe here” – Desta*’s story

Written by Delia Bradshaw

I was born in Tigray, a province in northern Ethiopia. I am a mathematician and have studied and worked in many universities. I completed my Bachelor’s degree at one university in southern Ethiopia and was then employed at another one, south of the capital (Addis Ababa). After that, I gained my Master’s degree at Addis Ababa University and then was employed at a university in Tigray, my home province. Later, I moved to China for 7 years where I earned my PhD and started post-doctoral work. I love mathematics and have been top student in my class.

In Ethiopia, the first 8 years of schooling are in the local language, (in my case, Tigrinya); after that, years 9 to 12, and then university, are in English.

From November 2020 to November 2022, a violent war involving different Ethiopian and Tigrayan groups caused widespread deaths, devastation and destruction in my home region. Some say a million people died; international organisations say 600,000. Many in my family and area died.

In China, I watched from a distance, following the horrifying events on the internet. I was very active in expressing my opinions on social media. I extended my PhD study for a year, fearing for my safety if I returned home, knowing nowhere was safe. People can tell who I am from name. They were arresting every Tigrayan at the time.

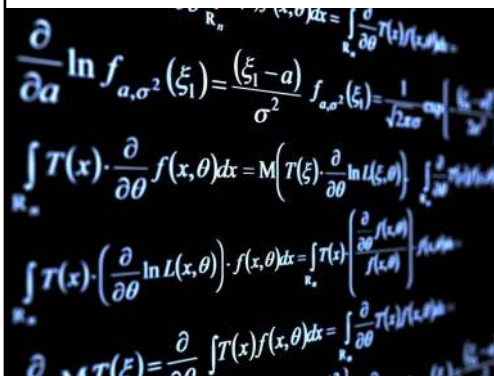
In China, the students who graduated in July 2020 asked the UNHCR for asylum but were rejected. Many in the same position as me went to Rwanda but could stay there for only a year. I also learnt that it was not possible to ask for asylum in China.

In November 2022, after two years of hostilities, the government of Ethiopia and the Tigray People’s Liberation Front (TPLF) signed an agreement, the Pretoria Agreement, to end the Tigray war. This resulted in opening up the internet, banks and other public agencies.

In July 2024, I decided to go home, thinking it safe to return to my province. On the second day, I was arrested by the TPLF. They questioned me for 20 days and then released me. I knew I had to leave.

My mum knew someone who helped me. I left to Addis Ababa the next day. I returned to China for my 8th year to continue my post-doctoral work. I could not stay indefinitely in China so looked and applied for international conferences to attend. The first to accept my application was the University of Queensland in Brisbane. I left there after a week to come to Melbourne where, I had been told, I would find more services and support. It was not easy, after all those years, leaving my post-doc work.

It is very hard starting a whole new life. For me, however, number one is safety. I am safe here.



I have been given great support by BASP and ASRC (Asylum Seeker Resource Centre). BASP has found me accommodation and access to legal support. I now live in a house where all of my housemates are mathematicians. We are keen to share what we know and are working on a project together: How to make mathematics fun and easy to learn.

As of 1 March, I am on a ‘Bridging Visa A’, which means I can work and study and access Medicare while waiting for my protection application (via Refugee Legal) to be heard. I try to make myself busy so not to be worrying about my visa.

(Continued from page 4)

The ASRC gave me a letter to qualify for study support. I am attending a class designed for 'Overseas Qualified Professionals' at Melbourne Polytechnic. The letter meant I was given a substantial discount. Many in the course are skilled migrants; I am the only asylum seeker. It runs for 3 days a week for 10 weeks. We are helped to become work ready, and this includes a work placement.

Last Saturday, I started working for Uber Eats, from 5-9pm, on a e-bike (rented). I have also started lessons learning to drive a car.

Everything is going good so far. I concentrate on the next step. People here are not racist. I don't miss anything here (I find the food I like in Footscray) except my family. I have a 14-year-old son who lives with my sister.

In Ethiopia, the local and federal government do not like people who question things. Here, I lower my voice to protect my family who are not politically active. People like me, well-educated and qualified professionals, are a great loss to our country but they don't seem to care.

Occasionally, I have doubts about my decision, but I HAD to leave for my own safety. I hope I get work here as a teacher. I want to serve and give back, to say thank you to all the people who support me here.

**Desta is not his real name, which has been changed for privacy and protection reasons.*



Volunteers and Supporters

BASP is blessed to have wonderful volunteers and supporters. One of our longtime supporters has rented us a house at low rent which has become home to a mother and son, following family violence. She called in to the house and found an exhausted mother needing a break. BASP arranged a camp for the son in the holidays but both were sick and could not proceed. BASP also matched them with a volunteer who has been greatly supportive,

taking the son to a fishing activity and providing friendship to a lonely mum.

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Three of our long time supporters have died in recent times, with their commitment to and connection with asylum seekers being significant in their funerals.

One, Marian Steele, assisted many with looking for work and she bonded with several in particular and became friends. Brigid gave the eulogy at her funeral, one asylum seeker and his family flew from Perth to attend and another was asked to read a prayer. Before doing so, he gave a short speech about how important Marian had been in his life, being his advisor, mentor and friend.

Another was Muriel Mathers. She and her partner Frank have provided housing in a bungalow at the rear of their home for a decade or more. Their current tenant, Sayed, has been there for 8 years and in closing her celebration of life, it was noted that Muriel had 2 wishes. One that Labor would win the election (done!); the other that Sayed will be reunited with his family. Muriel's family will continue to support him to achieve this goal.

Sr Angela Ryan, a Brigidine Sister, died after quite a long illness. Angela was a member of our BASP Finance Committee for many years. Guided by Patrick O'Connor that Committee keeps an eye on our overall financial position.



Still waiting

A man and his brother fled Iran in 2012 and because of the date of arrival in Australia, they were transferred to Nauru in 2013, then hotel detention in Australia in 2020 and released in 2022. BASP has housed them since then. The brother was assaulted in Nauru and has not spoken since. The man is a kind and gentle person, who tried to establish a business on release but the 6 month visas were a barrier to success. He assists us in our service to other asylum seekers, doing maintenance tasks when others can't.

He is despairing. Recently in our office, close to tears, he said "What is my crime? We are so tired – of waiting, of uncertainty, of our life slipping away".

He is a mature man who has skills that this country could use. Instead, our response is dragging him down year after year.

We have written to the Minister and his local MP highlighting his anguish and that of those who were on Manus and Nauru for whom there is no change in current policy of 'They will not settle in Australia'.

Help from LCM Sisters

The Sisters of the Little Company of Mary provide an Endowment Fund each year to help an asylum seeker pursue tertiary studies. This year it is a young man, who has study rights but no work rights to help cover the basic costs of university study. He recently sent us an update for the LCM sisters which showed how much this assistance meant to him.

"I'm very grateful for the support I received. I used the funds to cover my transportation and food costs while attending university, which has made it much easier for me to focus on my studies. I also used the money to buy essential study items like books, a laptop, and other materials I needed for my classes.

In addition, I was able to buy a good pair of shoes and some clothes so I could feel more comfortable and confident going to university. Your support has truly helped me settle into student life and concentrate on building a better future. Thank you so much for your kindness and generosity — it means a lot to me."

BASP thanks the LCM Sisters for this gift.



Such a generous gift to BASP

The Sisters in the FCJ Community have supported BASP over many years, especially through making 2 houses available for asylum seekers over many years. They sold one of these last year and in June, they transferred ownership of the other to BASP. We are so appreciative of this amazing generosity. The house currently houses 5 men in need of short term transition housing while they get established, secure work and are then in a position to find their own housing.

The garden has declined since the sisters left and needs some TLC, so a nearby asylum seeker with no work rights and a green thumb has happily agreed to take on this task, including any of the residents who are around.

Good Workers

BASP is conscientious, when people leave a property, about leaving it in good condition. We recently had a call from a community host to say the woman whom she had housed for 2 years had moved to independent housing but her room and hallway were stained from candle burning and cooking. We arranged for 2 asylum seeker painters to go and repaint the area. She was delighted by their efforts, saying they were "brilliant, the nicest people you could ever meet, so kind and so professional." Then men were delighted to have been helpful, engaged in work and for the payment from BASP.

Work continues to be elusive for so many of the people we see — for those with work rights and even harder for those without work rights who rely on cash-in-hand work to survive. We'd love to hear from anyone about any work or links to people employing others.

A camera for a happy father

Jeyakumar got his forklift licence and worked as a forklift driver in a warehouse for three years, until Immigration suddenly stopped his visa.

“They didn’t give any message or anything (so) we didn’t know that we didn’t have visas. My company noticed it. My manager said to me, ‘I think you don’t have a visa, can you check it with your lawyer?’ My lawyer had to check my visa status (and discovered that) one year earlier, my visa (had been) cancelled. My lawyer asked about the reason for this, but Immigration did not say any reason.”

Jeyakumar and his wife had suddenly become ‘unlawful non-citizens’ in Australia, without the right to work or to receive any support.

“For the first two or three years, we had to manage by ourselves. We had our jewellery, we had a camera and equipment. We had to sell everything one by one. After we had finished everything, the next step was to borrow some money from my friends, but after that I had to contact the Brigidine Sisters and their organisation.”

During this time, while they had no visas, the couple had a daughter.

“We were married in 2003, and we got a baby 19 years later. She’s a Down Syndrome baby, but that’s not a problem, she’s my baby. I’m happy! She’s very happy and a very cute baby. She hasn’t started to talk yet, but otherwise she is well.”

In November 2024, after 5 years without visas, they were granted open bridging visas with work rights. Their daughter’s visa has to be renewed every three months.

"Unfortunately, as I had to apply for Medicare, for the first two months we couldn’t do anything. After that I started cleaning work, just three to four hours work. I looked for other kinds of jobs but unfortunately I can’t do any heavy work. I have gunshot wounds all over my body. Before, I could do a little bit of hard work but now, with the long time that we didn’t have any work or any work rights and I stayed at home all the time, the previous gunshot wounds and other stuff, I have problems with pain starting and backpain and other pains. I can’t do any heavy work. Now I am starting with a cleaning job, but that’s not enough. I earn \$2,800 or \$3,000 per month. My house rental is \$2,050. And bills, electric bills and water bills and phone and fuel, and my baby, but everything, we have not enough.”

One of Jeyakumar’s skills is in photography, but without a camera, which he was forced to sell, he couldn’t work in this area. Recently, with financial help from BASP, he was able to purchase a good-quality camera. We hope that this will give Jeyakumar the chance to put his abilities to good use and help turn things around for himself and his family.

Do you need a **skilled photographer** for an upcoming wedding, birthday celebration, or other family or cultural event?

Or do you know someone else who does?

Jeyakumar Kananthan is an experienced event photographer looking for work. Originally from Sri Lanka, he has an Australian visa with work rights. He speaks Tamil and English.



Contact Jeyakumar **0405 513 754**



Stereotypes

The Brigidine Sisters lived in a house in Ardeer for about 50 years. Then BASP inherited this rambling dwelling and housed between 10 and 12 men for a number of years. Every now and again we meet one of the ex-Ardeer folk. One such person was visiting from Côte d'Ivoire. Sadou was originally from Guinea but now lives with his wife and three children in Abidjan. The family all have Australian and French citizenship.

In answer to the question “What are the most striking differences between Abidjan and Melbourne?”, his answer was, ‘In Africa, you don’t just walk down the street in a solitary way. We greet each other—even if you don’t know people. We exchange news and good wishes and there is a lot of laughing. In Australia people put their eyes down and say nothing—especially to strangers.”

We have so many stereotypes—we expected Sadou's response to be about differences like so much variety in the shops, the price of things, and that Australia would be seen as superior!! In the end what matters is relationships and happiness and care for each other.



In Bonbeach, there are three Brigidine houses and Sr Gail, a Brigidine, lives in one. BASP has

been very grateful to be able to use the other two for families seeking asylum.

Gail has helped both families a lot. She has had them for meals, dropped off ‘goodies’ for them, entertained the children in particular, given words of advice, comfort and friendship. One family has just moved on, the other (pictured above) are learning English and looking for work so they can be independent. If we could replicate this for all asylum seekers it would be great.

Thanks Gail.

Next Steps

BASP employed Julian for a part time role in the housing project in December 2024. He and his family had arrived in Australia earlier in 2024 and applied for protection. They immediately started English classes to be able to seek work. He was pleased to get a start at BASP and also secured overnight cleaning at Crown. These roles enabled him to get his own rental property and feel more established.

At BASP he collected donated furniture, replaced items in our houses and helped people move in or out of our accommodation. He helped clean up properties which were in need - inside and out - and did it all with a willing smile. He recently gained his heavy truck licence and advised us that he was seeking a full-time role in regional or interstate truck driving. He has now been successful in this, and we are delighted to have provided a stepping stone to this outcome. We will miss his willing assistance and will continue to involve people seeking asylum in any work opportunities which are appropriate.



Thank you and good luck Julian!

Creative ideas



Cassia House (which supports BASP) at Siena College in Camberwell recently held a "Winter Warmers" event featuring hot chocolate and Tim Tams, with proceeds of \$2,385.63 coming to our bank.

We often have contacts from schools who are very conscious of using some fund-raising event as an opportunity to educate students about the human rights issues surrounding refugees.



Sacred Heart students at Newman College

Brigid Arthur and Judy Ryan were invited to talk to the Year 11 students from Sacred Heart Girls College in Oakleigh about leadership. Judy reflected on campaigning to get a self injecting centre in Richmond and Brigid spoke about justice for asylum seekers to Year 11 students. The event was held in Newman College at the University of Melbourne.

One of the girls said afterwards: “I learnt more about servant leadership. It taught me that I’m allowed to be vulnerable, and I don’t always have to be okay to be able to be a leader and a role model. No one is perfect.

Another commented “I think my highlight was listening to the guest speakers. They persuaded me to act more about social justice in society.”

Often enough, we here at BASP are asked what gives us hope. In fact, we get a lot of hope from young people, and from schools where working towards a just society is obviously given serious consideration.

Humbling Situations

Written by Mohamad, a man who gave up seeking protection and went back to Peru.

He worked hard at his English and completed a welding course but could not secure work while here in Australia. He sent us this email:

“Re: Gratitude and Request for Assistance

First and foremost, I want to express my deepest gratitude for the unconditional support and kindness that the Brigidine Asylum Seekers Project has provided me during my 15 months in Australia. Your assistance, whether through legal guidance, food provision, or emotional support, has been instrumental during one of the most difficult periods of my life. The compassion and dedication of your team has given me strength when I needed it most, and I will always be grateful. Regrettably, I am writing to inform you that I must return to my home country as soon as possible. My children, who remain there, are in an increasingly serious and insecure situation. As a parent, I have no choice but to prioritize their well-being, although this decision weighs heavily on me. Leaving Australia is heartbreaking after the stability your organization helped me find here, but I must do everything possible to protect my family.”

A government repatriation scheme was able to pay for his return air fare and BASP provided funds to get to his village and have something for his family.

We wish Mohamad safety and well being as he tries to traverse the next years.

A large delivery of food from Kilbreda College

Sometimes, just when the food stocks are getting low, an organisation—school, parish, club or whoever—sends in a lot of groceries and household necessities, and we are relieved! Barbara keeps this organised (bringing her husband John to help). Recently Genevieve took Barb’s place when she and John were having a well-earned rest.

Thank you to all involved for your generosity.



Raising consciousness—together

Last month, during Refugee Week, Brigid spent a morning at St John's, the Anglican Church in Camberwell. She spoke at both Sunday services and was warmly welcomed by those present. This included having breakfast with a group of parishioners.



Fr Aaron and Karen Dew organized this with BASP and we hope to be able to continue our association—maybe around the #EndTheWaiting campaign.



A very typical story (unfortunately) of people whose lives are caught in poverty, no matter how hard they try

One of our volunteers has been visiting a family for several years. They were on Nauru, then in community detention and in recent times, were given a bridging visa. This meant they had to rent a house and pay their way after years of being denied the opportunity to be independent. The volunteer sent an update recently, which highlights the ongoing struggle for many.

Z and the family are settled into the house which is old and very cold. There's no proper income so they're being very frugal with heating.

Z's husband is trying to set up a small garden/ handyman business but he isn't getting much custom unfortunately. Their daughter, who is 21, is still doing the training course and has work one day a week through a traineeship. That will probably be finishing soon, so hopefully she might be able to find some casual or part-time work in that field. She's enjoying her course but is pessimistic about getting work at the end of it. She's heard that the pathology companies are reluctant to hire people on bridging visas.

Their son, who is 18, is still doing his unpaid work experience 2 days a week with a local mechanic. There doesn't seem any prospect of him getting paid work with them. It's so dishonest! He hasn't had any luck with other employment. Like so many people, he applies for jobs online but never hears back. He has a good resume and application letters.

He's a very quiet young man & is very isolated. Z tells me he spends most of his time in his bedroom. She's very worried about him. Z continues to have health problems associated with arthritis and her diabetes. She won't be looking for work.



The Annual Castan Centre Human Rights Law conference was held at the State library on July 25th. Brigid was a panelist exploring NEW CHALLENGES IN CLIMATE CHANGE LITIGATION AND HUMAN RIGHTS.

This gave an opportunity for a BASP perspective on issues such as the connection between climate justice and the displacement of peoples due to sea levels rising.

Brigid also brought up the need for a culture change where respectful relationships of interdependence are established. There will continue to be waves of people seeking asylum and security until and unless a more equitable world society exists.

Mercy Foundation Support

BASP sought and was granted \$10,000 from the Mercy Foundation to support women seeking asylum who continue to live in difficult and at times destitute situations.



The intention was to give some of these women a positive experience, to brighten the load of the day-to-day survival mode, which many were in.

By the end of May 2025, BASP had spent \$9,974 on a variety of options to meet the above goal.

The most popular option was a few days away from home, many with their children, at a holiday location. BASP used the respite cottages at Saltbush Balnarring for many of these. Saltbush provides cottages, an activity centre, bush walks and a nearby beach, meeting the interests of different age groups. It is affiliated with BASP under Kildare Ministries and is low cost.

A few also went to a weekend away at Millgrove with the funds being given for travel and food to cover the weekend costs.

Eighteen women and 67 people in total benefited from these mini-holidays. Reports were so positive. Some said it gave them the energy to keep going; others loved being able to give their children an enjoyable time away.

Other women were unable to take up the holiday option due to work, other commitments or health issues. We therefore offered a 'pamper' experience, arranging for a BASP volunteer to take them out for a treat of their choice. The sobering response to this initially was citing new car tyres or basic bills as their treat. We were able to meet their practical needs through other donations and then proceeded with the pampering.

One woman, whose husband requires multiple hospital visits from burns, opted for lunch out, some new underwear for herself and getting her nails done. The volunteer reported the joy on the woman's face each time she looked at her brightly coloured nails.

Another opted for a lunch out with the volunteer and 3 massage sessions over several weeks. She reported this easing her chronic pain for several days and being more positive within the family. The extra benefit was being befriended by the volunteer who has also taken up her family's case with the local MP.

Two older sisters opted for a shopping outing to get warm clothes for the winter. They were delighted to have the opportunity to choose their own items. Another opted for a Mother's Day outing at a restaurant, which thrilled her children as well as herself. Eleven women took up the pampering options.

Most of the women assisted by this grant arrived in Australia in 2012-13 and are still waiting for a protection visa. Some have work rights and are able to get a little work, fitting in with school hours and children's needs. Some have husbands and some of these have been injured by unfamiliar manual work or are impacted by mental health issues after years of uncertainty. Others do not have work rights and rely on cash-in-hand occasional work or charitable support.

While BASP is meeting basic needs to keep asylum seekers housed, fed and clothed, this was an opportunity to be able to bring some joy to these women and their families. It was very special and the coordinators greatly appreciate the Mercy Foundation's grant which enabled us to do this.

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

We currently have enough tinned food, except for cans of fruit, peas, carrots, corn.

The following are still very much appreciated:

- 1 kg sugar, oil (olive and vegetable), salt, pepper, tea, coffee
- Herbs and spices, especially coriander, cinnamon
- Blocks or individual wrapped cheese
- **Eggs are really appreciated**



Long-life milk, **honey is a most appreciated food**, noodles, tuna, basmati rice, dates, jam

(especially any red jam), cans of fruit (especially pineapple)

Gladwrap, tinfoil

Flat bread in sealed wrapping, as people often ask for bread

Sweet and savoury biscuits, snacks for school lunches (even when home!)

Shampoo, shaving cream and shavers, toothpaste and toothbrushes, soap, deodorant

Garbage bags and bin liners (small and large)

We seemingly never have enough washing powder, dish washing detergents or 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 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.



We had an amazingly generous response in terms of donations in May-June. This has helped us very considerably in being able to give assistance, particularly for rent, which is becoming increasingly expensive.



Our ability to give the level of assistance we do without direct fundraising is a testimony to the wonderful support we get from our BASP donors. No matter how much or how often you donate to BASP, know that you enable the work to continue. Others who give in kind, and those who volunteer their time, are also part of this community of generous people who contribute to many people seeking asylum experiencing care and support.

As we see on TV the vivid pictures of the displacement of people around the globe, and hear stories about the horror of people fleeing, we are reminded of the trauma associated with the reality of refugee lives. Know that you are all giving solace to some of these people who make it to Australia.

Brigid Arthur

Libby Saunders

(BASP Coordinators)