

STRENGTH AND KINDNESS

Brigidine Asylum Seekers Project (BASP)



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

Newsletter 123 February 2026

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

The passage of the *Combatting Antisemitism, Hate and Extremism (Criminal and Migration Laws) Act 2026* in January 2026, following a terrorist attack at Bondi Beach, has sparked intense debate in Australia regarding national identity, security, and the treatment of 'the other'. The legislation reflects a shift in cultural and political attitudes towards prioritizing national security and social cohesion, often framing external influences as potential threats.

The Bill passed with support from the government and opposition, but faced opposition from groups citing concerns about civil liberties, free speech, and the potential for increased discrimination against certain groups, particularly Muslims.

The time given for debate about the issues addressed by the Bill was extremely limited. This is a shame because many of these issues need a lot of exploration and could be used to educate us as a community. The legislation was criticised for potentially restricting free speech and creating a "chilling" effect on public debate, particularly regarding foreign policy or social issues. This can lead to a culture where dissenting views or criticisms of state actions are quickly labeled as extremist or hateful, further isolating individuals or groups from diverse backgrounds. The Bill reflects a desire to protect the community by tightening controls on who enters the country and what ideologies they bring. This approach can foster an environment where "outsiders" or those from different cultural or religious backgrounds are viewed through a lens of suspicion or as a potential threat to national cohesion.

As a nation we seem to be moving towards an emphasis on assimilation and conformity: The discourse surrounding the Bill suggests a strong pressure on, and expectation of, conformity to a specific definition of "Australian values". Apart from the fact that official interpretations of Australian values tend to be vague and often almost jingoistic, it is often difficult for asylum seekers, who may be fleeing different political or cultural contexts, to be welcomed if their behaviour or views are perceived as not aligning with this, at times narrow, definition.

The rapid, almost immediate, nature of the legislative response to the Bondi attack has fueled fear and division rather than fostered understanding. The resulting public discourse, which often highlights threats and security concerns, heightens public anxiety, making the welcoming of newcomers, particularly asylum seekers, more challenging.

The broad, often vague, definitions of "hate speech" or "prohibited hate groups" could be misused, unfairly targeting already marginalised groups, including asylum seekers.

**We fear the
definition of "hate"
is too broad,
potentially
criminalising speech,
protest, and political
debate.**

Donations to the Brigidine Asylum Seekers Project are tax deductible

Recent policy developments (and misinformation) that affect asylum seekers

Global trends Recent policy developments in 2023-2025 regarding asylum seekers have focused heavily on restricting access to asylum, increasing deterrence measures, and addressing legal challenges to indefinite detention, particularly in Australia, the US, and the EU. Simultaneously, misinformation campaigns have intensified, often framing asylum seekers as security threats or economic burdens to justify stricter border controls. For example in the UK in November 2025, the Labour government announced a major overhaul of asylum policies inspired by Denmark, treating asylum as temporary. Refugees will have to renew status every 2.5 years, and the wait for permanent settlement will increase from 5 to 20 years if the changes are introduced. In the EU, legislation at the end of last year determined that new rules allow member states to reject asylum claims as inadmissible if the applicant transited through a "safe" third country, even if a direct connection is not established.

Recent policy developments in Australia affecting asylum seekers include new anti-migration laws that expand government powers for removals to third countries, the re-emphasis on offshore processing on Nauru, and legislative changes following a High Court ruling on indefinite detention. Overall the laws affecting asylum seekers passed in 2023-5 are severe, focusing on deterrence rather than protection.

President Trump's claims that refugee movements are an 'existential threat to Western civilization' sent shock waves through people who are in desperate need to escape from persecution in their country of origin. The Trump administration's anti-refugee stance and policies have significantly impacted Australia, influencing its own hardline asylum laws, fueling similar rhetoric in Australian politics, and raising alarms among human rights groups about the global weakening of refugee protections.

Far-right, anti-immigration, and nationalistic organisations such as the 'Put Australia First' group have organized anti-immigration rallies in Melbourne and Sydney, attended by about 700 and 400 people respectively. Both rallies were met by counter-protesters. One Nation leader Pauline Hanson addressed Put Australia First's Melbourne rally, demanding a national debate on identity and values, and claiming immigration is the cause of unaffordable housing and unemployment. These are quite influential in certain sections of the community.

Widely circulated claims of out-of-control mass immigration in Australia are false and misleading and stem from the incorrect reporting of tourism and travel data that has nothing to do with migration, according to a major news report from The Australian National University (ANU). The report's authors say that public commentators, activists and some media outlets are incorrectly using Permanent and Long-Term (PLT) movement data, which is collected by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), to claim Australia has a 'migration problem' and distort public understanding. This is despite repeated, clear comments from the ABS that PLT does not measure migration but instead records people coming in and out of Australia, and includes tourists, temporary visa holders, returning residents and repeated short absences. ANU Professor Alan Gamlen explains that net overseas migration (NOM) — the number of migrants arriving in Australia minus the number of migrants departing Australia — is in fact falling sharply and has been since June 2023. The impact on asylum seekers is increased vulnerability, fear of deportation, longer times waiting for family reunion and exclusion from economic and social supports for asylum seekers leading them into destitution.

- Brigid Arthur



Sarah Dale is the Director of **Refugee Advice & Casework Service (RACS)** which is based in Sydney. Reflecting on recent legislation she says:

There have been many dark days in our immigration history: 24 August 2001, 19 July 2013 and now we add 24 October 2025 to that list. It is a day when our country chose exile over basic principles of humanity. This should shake to the core anyone who cares about the rights of refugees in our community.

Discussion Session

Wednesday, 4 March, 2026

2pm – 3.30pm

**Brigidine Ministry Centre,
54 Beaconsfield Pde, Albert Park**

In an article in The Conversation 31/10/25 Jon Faine wrote: *Balance and fact-checking are no match for mis- and disinformation. It is an ancient adage in journalism that “a lie has gone around the world before the truth gets out of bed”. Online hate speech inciting racism is largely unregulated. Resolving how to do so and to make the AI revolution serve humanity, and not just the tech titans, is the battle that will define our times.*

New hate speech laws: what do they mean for migrants, refugees and our community?



Speaker:

Josie Langbien from the Human Rights Law Centre, and a member of Liberty Victoria

As usual, there will be a catch up with BASP news



Palm Sunday

Sunday 29 March, Princes Bridge and Southbank CBD

For those who wish to walk:

1.30pm Gather on Princes Bridge with banners and placards

2pm - 3.30pm:

Lower Terrace, Birrarung Marr (near ‘Angel’ statue)

There will be speakers, music and stalls

We need volunteers to make the day a success. See next page for an outline of what is needed and details if you feel you can assist.

Would you like to assist with organising the Palm Sunday walk this year? If so, please email or phone ASAP !

For many years a family friendly community event has been organised on Palm Sunday to draw attention to the difficulties faced by people seeking asylum and refugees. The 2026 event will be on Sunday 29 March and is being planned and co-ordinated by a Palm Sunday Committee convened by the Refugee Advocacy Network. The Palm Sunday event is organised through partnerships by an alliance of faith organisations, trade unions, local councils, schools and others.

Volunteers needed to assist with organising (January – March) and also on the day (29 March 2026):

The focus for the Palm Sunday event will be how our communities can be more welcoming, so that all, including those who seek refugee protection can feel a greater sense of belonging, and be assured of fair treatment and justice.

How volunteers will assist: Volunteers will assist with key organising tasks, including:

assisting with the development of the promotional strategy and publicity materials

developing and implementing social media strategy

liaison with supporting organisations including unions and faith networks

engagement with schools to promote active participation

practical assistance on the day between 10am – 5pm to set up and pack down

How to let us know you are interested:

If you would like to contribute to the success of this event and are available to assist with any of these tasks between January and March, we are keen to hear from you.

Email or phone Marie Hapke convenor Palm Sunday Planning Committee or Renee Mazloum (BASP)

Phone 0409 252 673 or email info@refugeeadvocacynetwork.org.au (Subject line: Enquiry re volunteering for Palm Sunday 2026) Or email Renee at rmazloum@basp.org.au

A fact: The global need for international protection is at a record high, with an estimated 136 million people projected to be forcibly displaced or stateless by the end of 2026. As of mid-2025, over 117 million people were already displaced due to conflict, violence, and persecution.

Many people are internally displaced with 75% of the population in the Gaza Strip affected by displacement as of mid-2024, alongside major crises in Sudan, Afghanistan, Ukraine, and the Democratic Republic of the Congo

While millions need protection, the crisis is often described as one of solidarity, with 90% of refugees hosted in developing countries. In the face of this reality it is essential that developed and affluent countries like Australia address the root causes of people seeking asylum. Sometimes diplomatic interventions are possible and often Australia gives only timid responses to cruelty towards asylum seekers and refugees. This is happening now in the USA. More funding directed to fragile regions could significantly reduce the need for people to flee.

Australia's recent record is not good. Just before the end of 2024 the Federal Parliament passed three harsh bills that bring the human rights of many people under threat. It's not just a threat – in the past few weeks of 2025 we've seen reports that the Government has deported at least three individuals to Nauru under its secret deal worth \$7.5 billion in taxpayer money. Other reports have alleged that corruption has infiltrated this already disturbing system.

Even without this alarming news, most individual refugee journeys are already dark and difficult.

They flee persecution in their home country only to be confronted by an often grueling, labyrinthine asylum process in Australia.

News from BASP Office

As indicated in the last newsletter, Renee has joined Libby as a co-CEO and Brigid has stepped back but remains involved.

As the Christmas break approached, Sr Jude Caldwell advised us that she would leave her part time bookkeeping role at Christmas. Jude has been a quiet achiever in the BASP office, reconciling the books each month and chasing us if she did not have the right documentation. She was always so generous and interested in the asylum seekers coming in and was well known to many of the 'ex Bridgie girls' who dropped in as volunteers, supporters or just wanting to see her. We thank her with all our hearts for her years of service and wish her all the very best in the future. Living next to the office, we are hoping she will come in for lunch as often as she wants.



BASP also thanks Marion McGregor who joined us on a short term contract to help capture some of the institutional knowledge of BASP- mainly from Brigid. Marion has willingly stepped into other tasks as they presented themselves and has been a delightful member of the BASP team while she has been with us. Many thanks Marion. Finally, we welcome Cleo Fleming to the team as the newly appointed Housing and Support Officer. Cleo comes with a wealth of experience and has worked with St V de P executive services and with Companion House in ACT, amongst other roles. Her role is funded by a grant from the Sisters of St John of God and we thank them for their continuing support of our housing program.

Employment

Several of the men who have flown in and sought protection have been PhD academics in maths or engineering from Ethiopia. They have been surprised as to how difficult it is to secure work of any kind but persevere, ever appreciative of BASP's support with housing, food, money and moral support while trying. We all celebrated the success of one who secured a job as a maths teacher in Geraldton for the 2026 year, after making 175 applications. Another 2 secured casual work in December, sorting mail for Australia Post. They reported how positive this was for their wellbeing- just to be busy and able to contribute to their own living needs.



BASP has recently made contact with the Salvation Army Employment program, funded to help many, including the people we support. We are seeing early positive signs of employment opportunities and will review this over coming months.

Rasoul, pictured, is an asylum seeker who has set up a double glazing business - see **HMR Glaziers** on their web page. Rasoul has been assisting BASP with basic maintenance, such as painting and repairs and has done these jobs well. He'd be please to quote on any possible jobs..

We get many similar pleas for help. with rent

Hi mam , good morning. What I'm saying is, I asked him to give me a couple of days' time, but he didn't listen. Last night he even came home and shouted a lot in front of the kids. He told me to leave the house by today afternoon. I have no other option, ma'am, I'm leaving the house. I asked someone else if I can store my things with them for a few days until I find another place, and they agreed. I have no home, nothing at all right now. I'm taking my wife and kids and just asking for a couple of days' time from someone. He said he'll talk to his wife and let me know. I don't know what to do. I'm looking for a house, ma'am. If you could help me at least a little bit, it would be a huge help. They've asked me to leave by 1 PM today. If you can just help me find a place, I'll quickly get some work and move on, God promise. I just need this help right now, I have no other option. I don't know what to do, and my daughter is also not feeling well.

BASP assisted with rent to enable them to remain housed.

BASP Online Trivia Night

St Mary's Hampton online trivia event in support of the **Brigidine Asylum Seekers Project** is back on Friday 1 May.



We aim to provide a fun night for you and your friends and raise money for a good cause, and we'd love your support. To take part, sign up as a team host, and get your team together for a light-hearted night of trivia and conviviality. Suggested minimum donation of \$30 per team member.

When

Friday 1 May 7.30pm to 9.40pm

Where

Your place! Invite a group of friends to your home, up to 10 people - small groups are welcome. If you prefer you can form a distributed team in several locations and use our online breakout rooms to talk over your answers.

How

You don't need to be a tech wizard. You need a smartphone, tablet (iPad, Android) or a computer with sound (a webcam would be nice but not essential). You'll get a link for the Zoom online chat service and use your web browser to answer the trivia questions. Check the website for more details.

Booking and more information: cohdig.au/trivia



On Sunday 8th February, a group met at the Brigidine Ministry Centre in Albert Park for a reading of small excerpts from a novel by Renee Brandt.

Klaus Neumann wrote the script which consisted of excerpts from the novel and commentary pieces from Hannah Arendt and other writers.

Klaus the talked about a parallel in today's EU where push-backs of refugees who no country wants are occurring. In Europe people are moved on until they reach the external border of the EU (Poland and Belarus) where many refugees are stranded.

Ashburton Baptist Church has been supporting people seeking asylum for many years, including through 2 units, managed by their partner Baptcare. In 2025, Baptcare decided to withdraw from its housing program and the church committee approached BASP to take on the management of the 2 units. BASP looks forward to this new arrangement and was warmly welcomed at the Church's end of year gathering with the committee and volunteers. One unit has a longstanding tenant who will continue to reside there. A newly arrived family of 4 (soon to be 5) has just moved into the 2nd house with the Church volunteers, committee and BASP working closely to provide a positive settling in.

Each year the Brigidfest Committee holds a lunch for many in the Irish diaspora and those interested in all things Irish. It celebrates St Brigid and the proceeds of the day are donated to BASP.

This year the guest speaker was Her Excellency Fiona Flood the Irisha Ambassador.

Present also were Mary-Clare Hughes, Consul-General of Ireland in Melbourne and Professor Ronan McDonald, President, Celtic Club.



BASP has lodged a submission to the Parliamentary Committee concerning the secretive, multi-billion-dollar offshore arrangement, which involves Australia paying Nauru over \$400 million initially (potentially \$2.5 billion over 30 years) to accept members of the "NZYQ cohort". This group consists of non-citizens released from long-term, indefinite detention following a 2023 High Court ruling, who are now being sent to Nauru.

BASP began in 2001 and Australia's relationship with Nauru has been part of the backdrop of our Project over its history.

Nauru is a tiny island in the Pacific (less in size than the Melbourne airport). It became a German territory in 1888 and over the time of both World Wars the United Nations gave a role in administering the island to Australia. It became an independent state in 1967.

Since 2001, Australia has initiated arrangements with Nauru designed to deter boat arrivals from going through the process of having their claims for asylum processed in Australia. These contracts have been renewed by successive governments, with major, costly agreements signed in 2001, 2012, 2021, and 2025, involving billions in aid and operational fees, despite significant human rights concerns. Each of these shifts in government policy meant shifts in our interaction with asylum seekers.

Treatment of Detainees on Nauru

BASP has cared for individuals and families who have been in Nauru and been medically transferred to Australia. One man has become mute as a result of his experiences, a woman who was raped on Nauru is still finding it very difficult to trust anyone, a family who have significant mental health issues have teenage children who have to keep the light on all night and get the parents up frequently during the night to make sure there is no one in the house. They and others are still traumatised by their experiences in the Regional Processing Centre (RPC).

We believe on the basis of what many have told us that their experiences amount to severe human rights violations and that detaining people on Nauru poses risks to health and life. RCOA highlights that many individuals sent to Nauru have serious, pre-existing health conditions worsened by long-term detention, and that Nauru lacks adequate medical infrastructure.

A shift in the contractual *raison d'être* with Nauru

This latest deal isn't focused on detention, but it will enable Australia to deport non-citizens whose visas have been stripped due to criminal activity or failed character tests. These are people who have no other country they could be returned to.

A sad reality is that with this, Nauru is entering yet another cycle of dependence on an unsustainable industry. Nauru came close to effective bankruptcy as phosphate mining on the tiny Pacific island collapsed. Now, processing refugees and accepting deported offenders may deliver the country a short-term financial boon but leave Nauru vulnerable to potential action in support of the human rights of those deported from Australia, and could cause compounding policy headaches in the years ahead.

From exportation of phosphate to importation of refugees, Nauru's economy has been anything but stable. Australia's part in this needs to be ethical and supportive – rather than contributing to this small island's problems.

Transitory people in Australia—a human rights disaster

There are many incidents described to us by people sent there about their treatment at the hands of the local community on Nauru. If these are true there is a lot of racist behaviour towards the refugee/asylum seeker population on the island, particularly by the police.

Over the years many people who were detained on Nauru have been sent to Australia for medical treatment. Under Australian law, these are classified as "**transitory persons**". As of August 2025, approximately 807 of these individuals, who arrived on or after 19 July 2013, remain in Australia with no permanent status and are subjected to policies requiring they eventually leave Australia. These new arrangements with Nauru are causing them significant fear of being returned to Nauru or transferred to other third countries.



Housing Update.

BASP houses around 150 people each month. Over the past 6 months, 26 people have been able to move to alternative housing after BASP's initial support. Most of these were able to secure enough work to move into private housing; a family of 5 gained permanent residency and moved on, 2 men died, 2 were asked to leave because of their inability to share with others, 3 went to NZ and one returned to his homeland.

One of the men who moved to his own housing, which was closer to his job, wrote, saying: 'I thank God for putting you in my path' - a beautiful expression of thanks.

For the man returning home, this was a success. After years on the street and losing contact with family, BASP offered him a room but he was initially barely able to talk and could certainly not explain his history. He gradually improved, agreed to seek mental health assistance and was admitted to hospital for several weeks. This unlocked the fact that his brother was a student in Sydney. He was delighted to make contact and reconnect the man with their mother in Kenya. Improved but still unwell he chose to return to his family where he could be better cared for. The vacancies these departures create are quickly filled. In this period, we housed a further 25. 15 were individuals and 2 families who flew in seeking protection, 2 families were fleeing domestic violence in Australia, 3 were studying in Australia but then sought asylum following changing circumstances in their homeland and 2 were released from Community detention.

We cannot always house people who need accommodation. We pay the rent of a further 75-80 people each month in order that they retain their rental property. We recently received a call from a social worker at a maternity hospital. She had a young mother who had a 4 yo and a 1 week old baby. Prior to the birth she was living with a friend but could not return with a baby as well. BASP had nothing available and neither did other agencies we work with. Would the friend agree if BASP paid some contribution to the household? No- but she knew someone who could help on that basis. With that, the family moved into a unit for 4 weeks while other arrangements were put in place.

Amongst the others, some are able to contribute to the costs of the housing once they get work, while others with no work rights, benefits or ability to secure income continue to rely solely on BASP's support.

"BASP's Support" is broad and we could not assist so many without the broader BASP community. One such couple in this community have a self-contained upstairs unit which they make available for short term stays. BASP called about a newly arrived man and for whom we had no immediate options. On the same day another 2 arrived. The couple took in all 3 for 2 weeks while BASP was able to arrange ongoing housing.

Another couple, who hosted vulnerable women in their home several years ago, contacted us recently to share their delight at the success of 3 of them. One has nearly completed her nursing degree and accompanies her partner to Africa to help in health clinics there. Another did engineering and has worked for 6 years on the Melbourne metro tunnel, recently opened. A third took the NZ option, available for people who were on Nauru to secure permanent residency, and this enabled her to reunite with her daughter and family. BASP often loses contact when people move on and/or get their permanent visa. We were so pleased to hear these positive outcomes.

At the end of 2017, the owner of a house went into care and offered the use of the property to BASP for families in need. It provided a haven for one family until 2023 and then another family- a single mother and 2 preschoolers moved in. The house has been recently sold and the asylum seeker family needed private rental. Despite the mother earning \$1000 a week as a childcare worker, she was rejected for multiple applications. Finally, an agent who knows – and trusts- BASP, said she had a place and would rent it to her. So begins her own rental history and a fresh start. However, she would never have reached this point of independence without the home she had for the last 3 years. Many thanks to the owner's family for their generosity over these years.

Generosity Galore.

BASP experiences the community's generosity all year through donations of funds, food, furniture and time. At Christmas this is magnified by the incredible generosity of many groups and individuals, thinking of others. Again St Finbar's arrived with their thoughtful and bountiful hampers which were delivered to individuals and families by many volunteers. Many messages of thanks were received for these.

Kilbreda and Killester also brought many goodies as did St V de P and several parishes and community groups. These bolster what we can give at Christmas and also carry over into January when donations can dip. The time and friendship given by our volunteers continue to make such a difference to people's lives. One, who was linked to a newly arrived man from PNG quickly had them both getting to know the bike tracks and also linking the asylum seeker into volunteering at a local food bank. Such a positive connection.

Sheila and Keremush (pictured) have been meeting for just over a year, with Sheila assisting Keremush in seeking – and getting - work and providing friendship and support to a delightful woman who has had to leave her family behind in order to secure her own safety. Sheila reminds us that volunteering is a 2 way street. In sending this photo she said: ' Thank you so much for introducing us. Forever grateful.'



Networking opportunities

BASP met with staff from the Salvation Army to explore employment pathways for people seeking asylum. The meeting focused on the Salvation Army's *Employment Plus* program, which aims to find genuine employment readiness and place people into work that is safe, secure and sustainable.

Since this meeting, BASP and the Salvation Army have established a clear referral pathway, with regular follow-up on individuals referred through the program. Early observations indicate that the Salvation Army team is highly responsive and proactive, providing timely updates on referrals and engaging quickly with people. Initial engagement and momentum are promising, and BASP is encouraged by the pace at which this collaboration is developing.

BASP participated in a sector roundtable which highlighted proposed European immigration policies that closely resemble Australia's past offshore detention regime, including the concept of "return hubs" in third countries with inadequate protections for women, children and LGBTQ+ people. The discussion reinforced the importance of continued, united advocacy to prevent the replication of harmful policies internationally and to promote humane and rights-based approaches to protection.

BASP attended the Women of the University Fund AGM lunch and gathering. The event highlighted the Fund's longstanding commitment to supporting children in need and its generous and ongoing support of BASP. The gathering provided an opportunity to strengthen relationships and acknowledge the role the Fund plays in enabling BASP's work.

BASP has strong relationships with many other groups. We have worked closely with Refugee Legal and ASRC in getting names of individuals and families to be registered for consideration for Permanent Visas. We attended the Refugee Legal Annual Dinner, featuring a keynote address by Behrouz Boochani and an address from David Manne, CEO of Refugee Legal.



Women of the University members with Renee and Brigid at their AGM



Macedon RAR has supported BASP for many years and continues to seek ways to interact with asylum seekers for friendship and practical support. **On January 14, Macedon Ranges Rural Australians for Refugees (RAR) kindly organised a wonderful picnic at Woodend Park for a group of people supported by BASP.** The day began with a cheerful meet-up at Southern Cross Station, followed by a lively bus ride filled with music and laughter. At the park, the RAR team welcomed everyone with generosity and warmth, providing a delicious BBQ, snacks, desserts, and fruit, and facilitating games, soccer, and opportunities for meaningful conversation.



It was a joyful day of connection, shared meals, and friendship, highlighting the enduring support and dedication of Macedon RAR to people seeking asylum and to BASP.



The father of this baby was a teenage boy who had never before left his home village when he arrived in Australia in 2012. At that stage he was part of a Community Detention program for young asylum seeker minors. When he exited that program he was no longer eligible for school, study or assisted accommodation and had no work rights.

Reza then came to BASP, as an 18 year old asylum seeker, for accommodation and other practical assistance.. Over the following years, all the young men in that program we knew were judged to have refugee status and permanent residence. We were never able to understand why Reza did not get that response from the Australian authorities. His father and brother were killed and then his eighteen year old sister was killed because she was studying. The family had to flee to Pakistan for fear of the Taliban. Reza always felt guilty he could not support his mother and siblings. His mother is now alone in Kabul, with one child and one orphaned nephew to protect.

After eleven or twelve years, Reza was given a protection visa, He is married to Zahra and now they have baby Ayaz to give them great happiness.

BASP Christmas party



On December, 14th we had a lovely end of the year/ Christmas party.

John sent this lovely message:

To all at the Brigidine Asylum Seekers Project.

Thank you all for a wonderful end-of-year and Christmas gathering last Sunday afternoon.

It was a pleasure being able to directly meet several of you, and so enjoyably and valuably also to meet in a warm and relaxed environment with a number of Asylum Seekers, volunteers and supporters. Much was also learned from these conversations.

As it turned out on this particular tragic day in Australia's history following the Bondi Massacre, our gathering profoundly highlighted the importance of directly mixing, sharing with, learning from, and benefiting from one another through thoughtful, respectful, uplifting, supportive, and positive conversations.

It was we who should have celebrated you, but you who provided both the opportunity to meet, and very warm and cordial hospitality.

So many thanks to all at and associated with BASP, and very best prayerful wishes for a (much needed) better world in 2026

John Costa (St Kevins Templestowe Justice Group)

Most of us never have to think about visas—but for others it makes a crucial difference

A mother of five who just got a Permanent visa (after supporting her family for more than a decade) said to us: *I always wanted to be a nurse and now I can*



(To the left) We first met Taranoom as a baby and here she is, a beautiful young woman at the Christmas party (and still without a permanent visa

(to the right) Ali is celebrating his first Christmas after his father got a permanent visa.



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**



At present we need full cream long-life milk, noodles, tuna, basmati rice, dates, (), cans of fruit



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.

Thanks so much to all who made Christmas a happier time than it would have been without the generosity of many BASP supporters. We got many messages from those who received hampers and other help.



Some times we feel we get the thanks and expressions of joy when, after years of suffering, life gets better for people. One such email was:

How are you? I hope you are very well. We have wonderful news! Our family was granted the Permanent Visa . We really appreciate your help throughout the whole process. Your letter , the support of the organisation and emails to the Mp had a huge impact in getting a great outcome. Thank you for very much for your support! Please let us know when you are free we would like to meet with you.

BASP and all those working for change in Australia's treatment of people seeking protection have to know that all the hard, patient work does bring many outcomes that bring about life changes for many.

Libby Saunders

Renee Mazloum

(BASP Co CEOs)