

BATHURST REFUGEE SUPPORT GROUP ANNUAL REPORT 2021

1. The Bathurst Refugee Support Group continues to be active across the Bathurst community with many of its members being able to share their experiences in other community groups.
2. Topical issues affecting Refugees and Asylum Seekers, particularly from refugee advocates, continue to be circulated to Group members via email.
3. Letters of concern and Petitions relating to issues affecting Refugees and Asylum Seekers have been sent to Newspapers, Federal Ministers and Members of Parliament.
4. Members of the BRSG have continued to support Zaki a young Hazara man, who has been living in the Kath Knowles House of Welcome, and will complete his Nursing Degree this year.
Zaki has continued his studies at Charles Sturt University including a number of Hospital Placements, as a part of his training. He has also continued with his work at St Catherine's Nursing Home.
Members joined with Zaki for a celebration of his birthday at a dinner at the House of Welcome earlier this year.
5. Members of the BRSG are continuing providing a great deal of support to a number of refugee Sri Lankan families living in Bathurst.
This support has included assisting with the finding of work, giving driving lessons, financial support, purchasing of numerous items of need; giving of emotional support and friendship and assistance with many other varied tasks.
6. Jock Cheetham, a Lecturer in Journalism at CSU, spoke about the Bathurst Multicultural Storytelling Festival at the January meeting. The theme for 2021 was the same as for 2020, "How I got here." The Storytelling Festival was held over the Harmony Day weekend in March.
7. The Bathurst Refugee Support Group has been impacted, like everyone else, during the COVID crisis. No meetings were held during August and September; Planned activities were cancelled; Group members maintained contact through emails and phone contacts.
8. We were fortunate to be able to hold the planned fundraising BBQ at Bunnings just prior to the COVID Lockdown. This BBQ raised a profit of \$753-92, which was a great result with thanks to Sue and all those others who helped.
9. The Combined Christian Churches Service to mark Refugee Sunday again had to be cancelled for 2021. We look forward to planning for the Service in 2022 which will be held in June during Refugee Week.
10. BRSG in partnership with Service for the Treatment and Rehabilitation of Torture and Trauma Survivors (STARTTS) last weekend held a successful Training Workshop via ZOOM entitled "Core Concepts in Working with People from Refugee Backgrounds."
11. The Bathurst Refugee Support Group has maintained the Kath Knowles House of Welcome as a place of respite for refugees and their carers.
The Institute of the Sisters of Mercy of Australia and Papua New Guinea have indicated that they are looking at selling this Cottage, and their 3 lot subdivision on their Bathurst site has been granted by the Council.

They are still some way from completing the conditions imposed on them by the Council, and most likely have a year of work ahead of them.

BRSB has now had our licence extended for an additional 12 months, bringing the date to 1/1/2023 with no option to renew.

12. The Institute of the Sisters of Mercy of Australia and Papua New Guinea, as the owners of the Cottage, arranged for a number of items of Program Maintenance to be carried out.
13. A very enjoyable Christmas Party was held in December in Machattie Park. Also a very enjoyable Social Evening was held in the Uniting Church Activities Hall on Saturday 29th May, Jaganthan and Robina worked very hard and provided everyone with an excellent meal of Tamil food.
14. BRSB has been greatly blessed to receive a Grant of \$20,000-00 from the Mercy Action Support Fund.
15. The Bathurst Refugee Support Group has applied for a Grant under the Australian Government 2021 Volunteers Grants Program, having been recommended by Hon Andrew Gee MP, Member for Calare. Results of this application will be known in November.
16. The Bathurst Refugee Support Group provided donations towards numerous items for the Sri Lankan families whom it supports during the year.
17. A number of No Interest Loans have been provided to Refugees to assist them with their ongoing costs.
18. The Group continues to receive generous support from individuals and organisations, both financially and materially.
19. Media contacts have continued to be maintained through local print media, the Western Advocate and Bathurst City Life, and Radio 2BS, 2MCE FM and Central West ABC.

Particular mention is noted of:

- Voice Over advertisement on 2BS.
- Radio Interviews on 2BS and 2MCFM for Refugee Week in June.