

BATHURST REFUGEE SUPPORT GROUP ANNUAL REPORT 2022

1. The **PURPOSE** of the Bathurst Refugee Support Group is to uphold the right of Asylum in Australia, to mentor and assist refugees/asylum seekers in the Bathurst area, and to inform and mobilise people to challenge government policy and legislation which adds to the suffering of refugees and asylum seekers.
2. 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.
3. Topical issues affecting Refugees and Asylum Seekers, particularly from refugee advocates, continue to be circulated to Group members via email.
4. Letters of concern and Petitions relating to issues affecting Refugees and Asylum Seekers have been sent to Newspapers, Federal Ministers and Members of Parliament.
5. Members of the BRSBG have continued to support Zaki a young Hazara man, who will complete his Nursing Degree this year. Zaki has continued his studies at Charles Sturt University and is now working with Vivability.
Members joined with Zaki for a celebration of his birthday at a dinner at the House of Welcome earlier this year.
6. Members of the BRSBG are continuing to provide 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.
7. BRSBG has been able to accommodate a Sri Lankan refugee family, who moved from Canberra to Bathurst, in the Kath Knowles House of Welcome until they found rental accommodation.
8. The Group has offered, through Rural Australians for Refugees (RAR), to sponsor a family from Afghanistan. Much paperwork has taken place, with still no advice being received from the Department of Home Affairs. The Group is sending financial assistance to this family on a regular basis.
BRSBG Chairperson and Secretary met with the Government Senator, Senator Deborah O'Neill, on Thursday 20th October to raise the situation concerning Visas for this family. This meeting went very well.
9. The Bathurst Refugee Support Group was been impacted, like everyone else, during the COVID crisis.
10. BRSBG has been provided access to the free Interpreting Service from the Department of Home Affairs for a three year period until 2nd September 2024.
11. We were able to hold a planned fundraising BBQ at Bunnings in early September. This BBQ raised a profit of \$1,345-00, which was a great result with thanks to Sue and all those others who helped.
12. The Combined Christian Churches Service to mark Refugee Sunday was held on the 18th September in the Bathurst Baptist Church. Our guest speakers were Jane Bain and Michael Fsu and their daughter Hermela Fsu who spoke about the situation in the Tigray province of Ethiopia.

13. 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. They are still some way from completing the conditions imposed on them by the Council.
BRSO has now had our licence extended to the 1st January 2024 with both parties being able to give 6 months notice within that period.
14. 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.
15. 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 23rd July, Jaganthan and Robina worked very hard and provided everyone with an excellent meal of Tamil food.
16. BRSO has been greatly blessed to receive a Grant of \$10,000-00 from the Sisters of Mercy Assistance Support Fund, of which \$7,000-00 has been used to purchase a Van for Jaganthan to set up for catering.
17. The Bathurst Refugee Support Group has received a Grant under the Australian Government 2021 Volunteers Grants Program of \$1,250-00.
18. The Bathurst Refugee Support Group received a Section 356 Grant from the Bathurst Regional Council of \$2,000-00.
19. The Bathurst Refugee Support Group provided donations towards numerous items for the Sri Lankan families whom it supports during the year.
20. A number of No Interest Loans have been provided to Refugees to assist them with their ongoing costs.
21. The Group continues to receive generous support from individuals and organisations, both financially and materially.
22. Media contacts have continued to be maintained through local print media, the Western Advocate, and Radio 2BS, 2MCE FM and Central West ABC.
Particular mention is noted of:
 - Voice Over advertisement on 2BS.
 - Radio Interviews on 2BS.
 - An article with photo in the Western Advocate advertising the appeal for funds.