

BATHURST REFUGEE SUPPORT GROUP ANNUAL REPORT 2024

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. Its **AIMS** are to raise awareness about Refugee issues, assist and mentor Refugees settling into the community, host visiting Refugees and to provide financial assistance to organizations that support Refugees.
3. 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.
4. Topical issues affecting Refugees and Asylum Seekers, particularly from refugee advocates, continue to be circulated to Group members via email.
5. Letters of concern and Petitions relating to issues affecting Refugees and Asylum Seekers have been sent to Newspapers, Federal Ministers and Members of Parliament.
6. Members of the BRSBG continued to support Zaki a young Hazara man, who completed his Nursing Degree at Charles Sturt University last year. Zaki is now a Registered Nurse and has been working in Orange at Bloomfield Hospital, Zaki received advice of his Permanent Visa in August 2023.
7. 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, providing significant financial support, purchasing of numerous items of need; giving of emotional support and friendship and assistance with many other varied tasks.
8. BRSBG provided pocket money for the Refugee children whom the Group supports so that they could go and enjoy the Bathurst Winter Festival along with other children.
9. The Group, through Rural Australians for Refugees (RAR), is sponsoring a family from Afghanistan. The family includes three women journalists. Much paperwork has taken place, with still no advice being received from the Department of Home Affairs. The Group continues to send financial assistance to this family on a regular basis. Two members of this family have now escaped to Pakistan.
10. BRSBG has recently commenced discussions with the Community Refugee Integration and Settlement Pilot (CRISP). This is Australia's new refugee sponsorship program, and aims to welcome and support 1,500 refugee newcomers over the course of the four year pilot (2022-2025).
11. BRSBG maintains access to the free Interpreting Service from the Department of Home Affairs for a three year period until 2nd September 2024.
12. We have been able to hold two fundraising BBQ's at Bunnings this year. These BBQ's raised a profit of \$2,745-10, which was a great result with thanks to all those who helped.
13. The combined Christian Churches Service to mark Refugee Sunday was held on the 22nd September in the Catholic Parish Centre. Our Guest Speakers were Gill Hindmarsh and Abdul Khalil, a Syrian Refugee living in Orange, who spoke about his time as a refugee now living in Orange.

The Service was very well attended, and \$414-00 was raised for the Afghan family In Kabul whom the Group is supporting.

14. Together with Charles Sturt University (CSU), BRSB arranged for a special Speaker in Professor Eileen Pittaway who spoke on her work with Refugees, and particularly with Refugee Women.

15. A Christmas Party was held in December in the rear of the Bathurst Uniting Church, where everyone brought food to share, and enjoyed a great time of fellowship together.

16. A very successful mid year get together was held in July in the Bathurst Uniting Church Activities Hall for all those interested in the work of the Refugee Support Group. The food was all cooked and provided by one of our Sri Lankan Refugee families.

17. The Bathurst Refugee Support Group is very pleased that a number of the Refugees who we have been supporting have received their permanent Visas.

- Manomani, Ajith and Deva; Zaki who has graduated and is working full-time as a Nurse; Jaganthan, Robina and their children Thamnila and Dushant; Thileeban and his children Harini and Caleb; Mahendren, Renuka and their two children.

18. The Bathurst Refugee Support Group provided donations towards numerous items for the Sri Lankan families whom it supports during the year.

19. A number of No Interest Loans have been provided to Refugees to assist them with their ongoing costs.

20. The Group continues to receive generous support from individuals and organisations, both financially and materially.

21. Media contacts have continued to be maintained through local print media, the Western Advocate, and Radio 2BS.

Particular mention is noted of:

- Radio Interviews on 2BS for:
 - Information concerning the Afghan family which BRSB supports.
 - Promoting the Public Lecture at CSU by Professor Eileen Pittaway.
 - Discussion on Cultural Diversity.
 - World Refugee Day.

22. The Chairperson was the Guest Speaker at a meeting of the Bathurst Ladies Proboscis Club.