

BATHURST REFUGEE SUPPORT GROUP ANNUAL REPORT 2025

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 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.
7. 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 been living in Pakistan.
8. BRSBG maintains access to the free Interpreting Service from the Department of Home Affairs for a three year period until 2nd September 2027.
9. The combined Christian Churches Service to mark Refugee Sunday was held on the 21st September in the Bathurst Baptist Church. The Theme for this Service was "The Locked Door." Our Guest Speaker was the Rev John Jegasothy, a retired Uniting Church Minister, who spoke of the fact that his family were Refugees and the way in which he has been assisting Tamil Refugees in Sydney. He was also able to speak and share a meal with the our Sri Lankan Refugees and offer them love and support. The Service was very well attended, and \$750-00 was raised for the Afghan family In Kabul whom the Group is supporting.
14. Together with Charles Sturt University (CSU), BRSBG arranged for a special Speaker in Paul Power, the CEO of the Refugee Council of Australia, who spoke on the issues affecting Refugees which his Council has been taking up with the Australian Government.
15. A Christmas Party was held in December, as a Social Get Together, was held in Machattie Park where everyone brought food to share, and enjoyed a great time of fellowship together.
16. The Bathurst Refugee Support Group is very pleased that a number of the Refugees who we have been supporting have received their permanent Visas.

- Both the young Afghan men whom the Group supported through their Nursing Degrees at Charles Sturt University have passed their Citizenship tests with Zaki having been recognised at a Ceremony on 29th September, and Abbas waiting for his Ceremony.
 - Jaganthan has also passed his Citizenship test.
17. The Bathurst Refugee Support Group provided donations towards numerous items for the Sri Lankan families whom it supports during the year.
 18. A number of No Interest Loans have been provided to Refugees to assist them with their ongoing costs.
 19. The Group continues to receive generous support from individuals and organisations, both financially and materially.
 20. As a Group we shared in a farewell Dinner for Father Paul Devitt, who has moved from Bathurst to Mudgee, following our June Meeting. Father Paul has been a great Member and supporter of our Group.
 21. The Group has produced a Flyer advertising BRSG.
 22. 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 BRSG supports.
 - Promoting the Public Lecture at CSU by Paul Power.
 - Promoting the Refugee Sunday Service.
 23. One member of the Group gave a presentation at a Meeting of the Lithgow Council about her relatives by marriage in a UNHCR Camp in Sudan.
 24. The Chairperson attended a ZOOM Meeting run by the Asylum Seeker Resource Centre (ASRC) following the Federal Election, in which experiences were shared.
 25. The Group's Secretary:
 - Attended the RAR National Conference at Kyneton in Victoria, October 2024.
 - Spoke on matters involved with the Group to the Bathurst Baptist Church.