

## Armidale Sanctuary

### President's Report – December 2022

This is a long report...Sorry!

#### Projects and activities:

**Workshops on teaching English to Adult Ezidi learners:** An advanced workshop, mainly for people who had attended the introductory one, was held on Tues 22 November, again presented by Dr Liz Ellis. Seven people attended and once more reviews were very positive (average evaluation of 8.8 out of 10). Many thanks to Liz for all her effort in preparing and presenting this and the earlier 2 lectures, all funded by a federal government Volunteers Grant.

On 13 November, I sent an email to all volunteers about resources for teaching English to adults. Sanctuary will pay for the printing of these materials upon request, using funds from the Volunteers Grant. Please contact me [jsiegel@une.edu.au](mailto:jsiegel@une.edu.au) if you missed this email and would like me to resend it, or if you are interested in getting hard copies of the materials.

**Recognition of the Ezidi language:** I contacted the CEO of NAATI (the National Accreditation Authority for Translators and Interpreters) and found out the guidelines for getting the Ezidi Language recognised. Since then, I have met with Salam Qaro several times to work on a submission. I also contacted a colleague affiliated with Aston University in the UK who is a world expert on Kurdish. He is very interested in the Sinjar dialect, which the Ezidi language is based on. He sent me a list of words and phrases for Salam to record in the Ezidi language and used the recordings to provide an analysis, which we are including in the submission. The first draft has been completed and I am meeting again with Salam the end of this week to finalise it.

#### News:

Approximately 50 new Ezidi people in 8 families arrived in Armidale in November and early December. They are being well looked after by SSI (Settlement Services International) and members of the established Ezidi community, including SSI's new Bilingual Guides.

You may have heard about the tragic death in Armidale of a young Ezidi woman, Khalida Hakrash. Several members of Sanctuary attended her funeral on 7 December, along with dozens of others from the wider Armidale community. Following the funeral, Salam Qaro (STARTTS [NSW Service for the Treatment and Rehabilitation of Torture and Trauma Survivors]) sent an email thanking everyone on behalf of Khalida's family and the Ezidi community for their strong support. He also mentioned that the funeral ceremony was able to respect Ezidi culture and allow them to practise their religion. Our sincere condolences go to Khalida's parents, Khudher and Barfi, and to the rest of the family.

The Ezidi period of fasting this year will be 13-15 December, with the celebration of Îda Rojiyên Êzî on the 16<sup>th</sup>.

#### Meetings attended:

**New England Multicultural Interagency, 9 November.**

- The target is 170–200 new people on humanitarian visas to arrive in Armidale this financial year.
- Carole McKinney has replaced Sarah Mills as head of the Intensive English Program at ASC.
- Allied Health practitioners now have free access to Interpreters from TIS (the government Translation and Interpreting Service).

- Good news from the budget regarding visas and migration:
  - an increase in funding for visa processing staff
  - a review of immigration policy strategies
  - an additional \$4 million for the Adult Migrant English Program (AMEP) over 4 years
  - funds for an national anti-racism strategy
- The government aims to increase the numbers in the pilot Community Sponsorship of Refugees Scheme from 1500 over 4 years to 5000.
- 2 new Refugee Health Nurses are coming to Armidale.
- The women's group sponsored by SSI and STARTTS is going well. (Anyone wishing to attend, contact Teresa Duggan [Teresa.Duggan@health.nsw.gov.au](mailto:Teresa.Duggan@health.nsw.gov.au).)
- TAFE news:
  - 11 people have completed the Heavy Machinery unit of the Cert III in Agriculture
  - an English for Food Safety unit was given before running the Certificate in Food Management
  - students have been given lessons on nutrition
  - the Sydney Theatre Company ran 2 workshops on using drama to learn English in conjunction with HEP (the Higher Education Preparation and Partnerships Program). (This originated as an initiative from Sanctuary.)
- PCYC is running two multicultural groups (for on alternate Fridays, one for ages 12-18 and one for 19-25)
- Efforts are being made to enable people to do the Citizenship Test in Armidale, rather than having to travel to Tamworth.

**MMC (Mosaic Multicultural Connections)** (formerly NSS), 11 November, with Debbie Carstens (Manager, Settlement and Communities), Madan Narayanamurthy (the newly appointed Regional Coordinator), Aghasan Saleem (Settlement Worker) and Lucinda.

- Some in the Ezidi community are concerned about the repatriation of the ISIS brides and their children. Debbie will arrange for speakers to talk to the community about this and the issues of fairness and security.
- Debbie will follow-up on the suggestion (forwarded by Sanctuary) that a program for the Ezidi community be established on 2ARM.
- Extra funding is being sought for REAP (the Regional Agricultural Employment Project). If successful, volunteers will be needed to teach English for Agriculture.
- MMC is seeking more funding for the Homework Centre (\$6500 is needed to complement the currently available funds).
- MMC also looking into funding opportunities to continue the Digital Connections project.
- Partnership visas are taking an average of 2 years to be processed.

**Special meeting** with Madan and Aghasan (MMC) and Mirza Hanno (STARTTS), 24 November, to clarify the filling out of forms regarding pending applications and accounts of dangers faced by Ezidis still in Iraq and Turkey

**MCDT (Multicultural Community Development Team)**, 25 November:

- Finding housing for the new arrivals has not been difficult.
- There have been positive developments in health services with at least one doctor devoting one day a fortnight to new families.
- TAFE News (Jayne Ferris):
  - certificates presented to more than 10 students at the RSL club on 8 December. (Lucinda attended to represent Sanctuary.)
  - a quad bike course (3 units) will be run in January as part of the Cert III in Agriculture
  - next year's English classes for Ezidis: 2 preliminary, 3 Cert I, 1 Cert II and 2 Cert III
  - an office will be provided at TAFE for SSI and MMC to consult with students.

- DSISPA (Driving Social Inclusion through Sport and Physical Activity program) (Kristy O'Neill):
  - an extension has been received to use funding until April 2023. This will cover swimming lessons at UNE, the volleyball comp and monthly sessions at the Sports and Recreation Centre
  - the women's swimming group (Tuesdays 7.30-8.30 pm) have been a great success with 25-40 women attending. Next year there will be 2 groups, for younger and older women.
- Intensive English Centre (IEC) at Armidale Secondary College (Carole McKinney):
  - new arrivals as young as 11 years can now join with parents' permission
  - 2 new students have joined with another 3 expected in Dec.
  - the possibility was raised of opening up the IEC to 18-20 year olds who are too old for high school and do not want to go to TAFE with their parents.
- A new counsellor is starting at STARTTS in February.
- PCYC is running a photography group for 15-18 year olds, with Simon Scott.
- Unfortunately, there is a lot of vaping in the Ezidi community, even among underage young people. (See the following resources:
  - <https://www.health.nsw.gov.au/tobacco/Pages/vaping-factsheet-young.aspx>
  - <https://www.health.nsw.gov.au/tobacco/Pages/vaping-factsheet-parents.aspx>
  - <https://www.health.nsw.gov.au/vaping>
- HEPPP (the Higher Education Preparation and Partnerships Program) took some Ezidi students to Newcastle to do the IELTS English test to go on to higher education. If you know of anyone applying to or starting at UNE next year (including in the Pathways program), contact Henry Faithfull [hfaithfu@une.edu.au](mailto:hfaithfu@une.edu.au) so they can receive support.
- MMC arranged for 5 Ezidi youth from Armidale to travel to Manningvale for youth exchange program.

**Information session on applying for citizenship**, given by Lyn Payne (Refugee Services, Legal Aid NSW), organised by MMC, 6 December. Information from this session was sent out to the members of Sanctuary on the Citizenship Email List. If you want to receive this information, contact me [jsiegel@une.edu.au](mailto:jsiegel@une.edu.au) and also let me know if you want to be on this list.

Many thanks to all Sanctuary members for your involvement and support this year. All best wishes for an enjoyable festive season and a happy new year.

Jeff Siegel  
President