

Armidale Sanctuary

President's Report – November 2022

Projects and activities:

Workshops on teaching English to Adult Ezidi learners: A repeat of the introductory workshop, conducted by Dr Liz Ellis, was held on Tues 25 October, with 8 people in attendance. Once again participants rated the workshop very highly, with comments such as “useful”, “excellent”, “perfect”, “great materials provided” and “feeling much invigorated”.

An advanced workshop, mainly for people who have attended the introductory one, will be held on Tues 22 November. Email lizmarg.ellis@gmail.com to register. (Note that there may be changes to the time and venue previously advertised, and also there is the possibility that people who have not attended the introductory lecture will be able to attend this one. I'll send out an announcement from Liz when she returns from overseas on 15 Nov.)

Fiesta La Peel: Sanctuary hired a bus for more than 50 people from the Ezidi community to go to this multicultural festival of food and entertainment in Tamworth on Sat 15 October. A great time was had by all!

News:

Tim Gray (SSI) announced 11 new Ezidi arrivals on 4 November: A family of 4 (single mum and 3 children, aged 8, 9 and 10), a family of 6 (parents and 4 children, 9, 11, 13 and 21) and a single young woman. A family of 9 with children ranging from 8 to 23 are due to arrive on 17 November. A family of 5 (3 children 9–11) and a family of 5 adults are due to arrive on 18 November.

Meetings:

STARTTS (NSW Service for the Treatment and Rehabilitation of Torture and Trauma Survivors), 25 Oct, with Teresa Duggan, Mirza Hanno and Salam Qaro.:

1. STARTTS would welcome any Sanctuary members to attend the women's group that meets every other Wednesday 12 – 2 pm at the Armidale City Church. Contact Teresa if you'd be able to attend a meeting Teresa.Duggan@health.nsw.gov.au.
2. Between 150 and 200 people attended the police information session for the Ezidi community on 18 October at the Town Hall. The NSW Deputy Commissioner of Police and several other members of the police department came up from Sydney and talked about issues such as reporting crime, cyber security and domestic violence. By request, they also gave information about careers in the police force.
3. SSI and Mosaic (formerly NSS) are organising swimming classes for adult Ezidi women. For more information, contact SportUNE.
4. TAFE has started a Cert III course in Community Services. So far 12 Ezidis have enrolled. Enrolments are still open.

STARTTS Men's Group:

I was invited to attend a STARTTS men's group meeting and did so on Wed 26 Oct. The group was run by Mirza and Salam. Some of the issues discussed:

1. People are concerned about what will happen when someone from the Ezidi community dies in Armidale. Their custom is for people from the community to dig the grave, and for the person to be buried as soon as possible (the same day as death or the next day at the latest). While there is a Ezidi area of the local cemetery, there is no information about burial restrictions. (I advised Salam to contact Piddington's about this, but if anyone knows the protocols, please get in touch with me.)

2. I brought along forms I'd developed at Mirza's request to gather information about issues brought up during Paul Power's visit. Two of these forms will be used to provide information on the inordinate length of time people are waiting for decisions on applications for partner visas and for humanitarian visas for family members. The other two forms are to gather information about security issues and other dangerous situations facing Ezidis back in Iraq. This information will be used for future applications for humanitarian visas, and for reapplications of those that have been rejected.

3. Last month I mentioned the efforts underway to get the Ezidi language recognised by TIS (the Translation and Interpreting Service). Since then, I wrote to a friend who used to be on the board of NAATI (the National Accreditation Authority for Translators and Interpreters). He advised that the first step would be to write to NAATI showing community support and demonstrating that the Ezidi language is distinct from Kurdish Kurmanji. At the men's group meeting, Salam agreed to gather a list of linguistic differences in vocabulary and grammar. I will work with him to write these up using the International Phonetic Alphabet (as the Ezidi language does not have a recognised writing systems.)

Thanks go to all Sanctuary members for their activities and support.

Jeff Siegel
President