

Armidale Sanctuary

President's Report – October 2022

Projects and activities:

Annual Human Rights Lecture: This interesting and informative lecture was given by Paul Power, CEO of the Refugee Council of Australia (RCOA), on Thursday 6 October at the Bowling Club. His topic was "Advancing a fairer Australia: The role of local communities in refugee policy reform". Paul talked about RCOA's vision for how the government should deal with refugees. He covered six different areas, outlining current policy and the changes RCOA is advocating for. He concluded with some suggestions about people in the community can be involved. Unfortunately, Paul was unable to show his power point presentation because of technical difficulties. But he has made it available to anyone who is interested. Please email me jsiegel@une.edu.au if you would like to receive it.

Workshops on teaching English to Adult Ezidi learners: As previously announced, there will be two more workshops presented by Dr Liz Ellis. The first will be a repeat of the introductory workshops held last year and earlier this year. It will be held on Tues 25 October. The second will be an advanced workshop for people who have attended the introductory one. It will be held on Tues 22 November. Both will be at UNE and go from 11 am to 4 pm (with an hour for lunch 1-2 pm). More information is given in the attachments that accompany this report. Please note that registration is essential and enrolment is limited. So get in quick to avoid disappointment.

Fiesta La Peel: This multicultural festival of food and entertainment is happening in Tamworth on Sat 15 October, 3 – 8 pm <https://www.destinationtamworth.com.au/events-festivals/fiesta-la-peel/>. Some members of Armidale's Ezidi community have made arrangements to go to Tamworth for the event and Sanctuary is hiring a bus to enable others to attend as well. The bus will leave at 1.30 from the Visitors Information Centre and return at 5.30. Anyone interested should contact Tim Gray at SSI tgray@ssi.org.au.

News:

Tim Gray of SSI (Settlement Services International) announced that a new Ezidi family of 9 will be arriving mid November. More arrivals are expected early next year.

NSS (Northern Settlement Services) had been "rebranded" and is now MMC (Mosaic Multicultural Connections).

Meetings:

STARTTS (NSW Service for the Treatment and Rehabilitation of Torture and Trauma Survivors), 20 Sept, with Teresa Dugga and, Salam Qaro (STARTTS) and Astrid Knirsch (Sanctuary):

1. STARTTS is running both a men's group and a women's group, each meeting once a week at Armidale Community Church.
2. The new youth worker, Mirza Hano, took 20 high school students camping at Lake Keepit, 29 Sept – 1 Oct.
3. Armidale police held an information session at TAFE in early September about how to contact police, and issues concerning driving – such as breathalysing and how to react to a police car with flashing lights.

4. On 18 Oct, the NSW Deputy Commissioner of Police will be coming to Armidale and conducting an information session for the Ezidi community 4 – 8 pm at the Town Hall, with dinner provided. Topics will include home security, child supervision, safe cycling and career opportunities in the police force.

5. More than 400 people have signed a petition to get the Ezidi language recognised by TIS (the Translation and Interpreting Service). Currently, Kurdish Kurmanji is designated as the language of the Ezidis, but this is not always understandable to them and many communication difficulties have been reported. This initiative is being supported by both the Mayor, Sam Coupland, and our local member, Adam Marshall.

SSI, 29 Sept, with Tim Gray and Lucinda Wright: to discuss plans for travel to Fiesta La Peel.

I also accompanied Paul Power to meet with the STARTTS men's group on 5 October. The main issues they brought up were: 1) the long waiting times for spouse visas, 2) the concern for relatives still in Iraq and the desire to bring them to Australia and 3) the Ezidi language issue (mentioned above).

Thanks once again to all Sanctuary supporters and volunteers.

Jeff Siegel
President