

Armidale Sanctuary

President's Report – September 2022

This is a short report as I was overseas for 5 weeks in July and August. Many thanks for to our Vice President, Lucinda Wright, for filling in while I was away.

Projects and activities:

Annual Human Rights Lecture: This year's lecture will be given by Paul Power, the CEO of the Refugee Council of Australia. It will be on Thursday 6 October at the Bowling Club, 5.30 for a 6 pm start. The topic will be "Advancing a fairer Australia: The role of local communities in refugee policy reform". This promises to be an interesting and informative talk by the head of the most influential organisation advocating for refugees in Australia. (flyer attached)

Sponsoring Afghan refugees: As reported earlier in the year, Sanctuary has proposed 3 Afghan families for Humanitarian Visas. We have finally received an acknowledgement of receipt for one of the applications from the Department of Home Affairs. This is for a family of 6 (parents and 4 young children) who have escaped to Pakistan. We submitted their application in February 2022. But we still have not received acknowledgements for the applications submitted in November and early December last year.

Workshops on teaching English to Adult Ezidi learners: As promised earlier, there will be two more workshops presented by Dr Liz Ellis. These will be held in October and November. Stay tuned for further details!

Meetings:

Lucinda represented Sanctuary at the MCDT (Multicultural Community Development Team) meeting on 26 August. Here are some points from her notes:

1. Tim Gray advised that SSI had been informed by the Department of Home Affairs of about 200 referrals for settlement in Armidale of refugees from Syria and Iraq and Turkey but no dates for arrivals had been given. This would be in addition to the approximately 170 Ezidis that had already been approved but not yet arrived. These people were in the process of getting their medicals redone but arranging their exit visas and air travel would also take some time and it was likely that no one would arrive for about 6 months.
2. Information sessions for service providers will be given by the police and other services (Benevolent Society, Family Support, Women's Shelter, etc). These will cover crisis situations such as domestic violence as well as child safety and digital safety.
3. TAFE is continuing to provide additional vocational courses such as an agricultural machinery course for participants in REAP (Rotary's Rural Employment Agricultural Project). Other courses being planned are barbering, hair salon, community services, and prevocational courses in sewing, measuring and cutting materials. Community Health (Joy Harrison) has given briefings to students on women's health issues and briefings on men's health are planned.
4. Kristy O'Neil (UNE) reported that the DISSIP program is coming to the end of its funding but there is funding for swimming classes in Term 3 and 4. There is also free soccer each Tuesday afternoon for students between Grades 3-6 to join in on an informal basis.

Thanks once again to all Sanctuary supporters and volunteers.

Jeff Siegel
President