



Bridge for Asylum Seekers Foundation

UnitingCare NSW.ACT

**Newsletter
June 2007**

**Honorary Chairperson:
Virginia Walker**

PO Box 829, Five Dock NSW 2046
Phone: 0418 261 160

Email: asylumseekersfoundation@bigpond.com
Website: www.asylumseekersfoundation.com

ABN 78 722 539 923

Bridge for Asylum Seekers Foundation (BASF) is now almost four years old. It is hard to imagine that we have managed to exist for as long as this. There have been many milestones.

At our May management meeting, we allocated \$86,800 to support 102 people, including 74 adults and 28 youths or children, for the next thirteen weeks. Our current recipients come from Burma, China, the Middle East (including Iran, Iraq and Palestine), Bangladesh, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, South American countries, African countries (including Algeria), Papua, Nepal and North Korea. In addition to those we are currently assisting, we have provided funding to 116 adults and 42 children and youths since the launch of BASF in 2003. Every month there are additional requests for financial assistance from asylum seekers who are destitute.

CDSE scheme

The Community Development Support Expenditure scheme is run by local councils in NSW and distributes revenue made by clubs to local organisations. Recently we have submitted applications to approximately 20 councils where our clients live. This month we have been given a donation of \$11,000 by the Canada Bay Club for which we are very thankful.

Update on work rights

Asylum seekers who have managed to obtain work rights frequently have problems finding work because the work rights are issued for three months at a time. Now, these problems are being compounded by the different ways that the current and former Ministers process applications for protection and work rights. Some asylum seekers who

have previously had work rights find that they are no longer eligible for these work rights. This is not only very frustrating for asylum seekers who want to work, but also means that they must once again rely on relatives and BASF for all their needs.

Former detainee runs Sydney Half Marathon

A former detainee, who was released two months ago after 14 months in Villawood, managed to complete the Sydney Half Marathon on 20 May in under 90 minutes, despite the fact that there was no way he could undertake any training in Villawood. He would be delighted to find a running group close to the Hornsby area to train with for the City to Surf.

Phone cards for people living in the community

Many readers of the newsletter ask "Is there anything I can do to help without making regular donations?" There is something simple you can do. The weekly sum that BASF is able to give to asylum seekers is often completely insufficient for them to make phone calls. Many have no access to a land line and have to rely on either a mobile or a Telstra phone card. If you can help, please pop a Telstra card, or Optus mobile re-charge card into an envelope and send it to BASF at post box 829, Five Dock NSW 2046.

Manning Clark House

Virginia Walker and Kate Maclurcan attended "A Fair Go For Refugees" hosted by Manning Clark House from 31 March to 1 April. This was a 'weekend of ideas' providing the opportunity for those involved with the refugee and asylum seeker movement to get together. An exceptional array of speakers

gathered to examine principles, policies and practices underlying successive governments' approaches to refugees (especially asylum seekers and temporary protection visa holders), detention and immigration. Speakers included politicians, academics, writers and filmmakers, journalists, refugee advocates, and refugees themselves. A Statement of Principles was confirmed at the conclusion of the weekend.

The statement can be found at www.manningclark.org.au/weekendofideas2007.

Acting from the Heart

Tuesday, 19 June at 6.30pm, Kate Maclurcan will give a pre-launch talk on *Acting from the Heart*—Australian advocates for asylum seekers tell their stories, at Leichhardt Library. Free. Bookings essential: 9367 9266.

Who is that Refugee?

Wednesday, 20 June from 10.30am to 12.30pm. Come and hear Amir's story - a remarkable refugee who spent five years in Villawood. Performance by Actors for Refugees, music by Kate Maclurcan and other special guests. Sydney Mechanics School of Arts 280 Pitt St (between Bathurst & Park Streets). Advance copies of *Acting from the Heart* will be available. Free event. Morning tea provided. Bookings essential: 9810 5826 or building.bridges@hotmail.com.

Emailing our information

If you receive our newsletter by snail mail and are able to receive it by email please advise us. It will save us paper and postage.

Report from Asylum Seeker Project Coordinator—Kate Maclurcan

Virginia Walker, co-founder and Honorary Chairperson of BASF, was honoured with the 2006 HREOC Human Rights Award in the Community (Individual) category. Virginia, with a small group, started BASF in 2003 to support refugees adrift in our communities without work rights, access to services or other means of support. Well done Virginia! We are immensely proud of all you do in devoting yourself tirelessly to looking after so many who have no voice. You inspire us all!

In February, our presence at the Refugee Art Show at the Balmain Watchhouse, organised by Balmain for Refugees' Debby

Nicholls, raised \$2,890 for our coffers. Thanks to donors Mary and Geraldine Berkemeier and Elaine Raahauge for her superb quilt.

Chatting in Harmony

BASF ran a stall in the Sydney Town Hall foyer during the Harmony Concert on 20 March. At lunchtime on the day, 140 guests, including groups who travelled from Canberra and the South Coast, flocked to the crypt of St Mary's Cathedral to hear the ABC's Geraldine Doogue in conversation with Prossy Tusabe. In 2000, Prossy fled war-torn Uganda and arrived in Sydney as

the only member of Uganda's Paralympics swim team. Then she began a six-year battle to gain refugee status. Thanks to the work of Balmain for Refugees, Prossy's claim was eventually successful in 2006. Along the way, BASF provided financial support. Prossy has recently commenced a Bachelor of Nursing at UTS and we wish her every blessing! Although a free event, the 'chat' raised over \$1,000 from our raffle, sales and donations. Thankyou to City of Sydney for generously sponsoring this event and to Fr Neil Brown, Dean of St Mary's Cathedral, St Mary's Cathedral School and to the Flower Factory at Neutral Bay.

Funding Coordinator's role

Leichhardt Council saved the day by once again demonstrating their commitment to the cause of refugees. Leichhardt voted unanimously in May to again fund the Coordinator's role up to \$15,000. We are grateful to Leichhardt Council for this generous support and hope that other local Councils will also, once again, come to our aid.

Acoustica

The Acoustica music festival in Balmain once again featured BASF as the primary charity fundraisers. Nearly \$2,000 and more friends for BASF were gathered. Big thanks to Leichhardt Council who underwrite this event and bring us on board and to our Balmain business donors: Hunt Leather, Circle Café and London Hotel.

Refugee forum

On Wednesday, 20 June from 6 to 8.30pm, the former Marrickville Mayor, Sam Byrne, will host a refugee forum at Newtown Neighbourhood Centre (opposite Newtown station). Speakers from Amnesty International, Refugee Council of Australia, Asylum Seekers Centre, Fr Jim Carty from The House of Welcome and Kate Maclurcan for BASF. Performance by Actors for Refugees. Artworks & Stalls. Free. Light supper provided.

Bridge for Asylum Seekers Foundation

PO Box 829, Five Dock NSW 2046 (02) 9810 5826; 0418 261 160 www.asylumseekersfoundation.com

I would like to help the Bridge for Asylum Seekers Foundation provide direct support for Visa "E" and special category refugees. Please send me:

- () more information about Bridge for Asylum Seekers Foundation
- () information about direct bank or credit card debits for regular donations

Name

Address

Postcode

Phone

Email

Herewith by cheque/credit card - Visa/Mastercard

\$

Card number

Exp date

Signature

DONATIONS of \$2 or more to Bridge for Asylum Seekers Foundation are fully TAX DEDUCTIBLE