



Wine tasting

Friday, 15 June

6.00-8.30pm

At **Allens**,
Corner Hunter & Phillip Streets,
Sydney



Please join us for an exciting innovative wine tasting **presented by Cogito**, featuring quality boutique wines from some of the best new and old world vineyards and winemakers in Australia, NZ, Italy, Spain and Portugal.

MC John Newton will host the evening and introduce delicious regional cheeses and dips to tempt the taste buds and complement the wine.

- *Wine Tasters Ticket*: \$70

- *Wine Enthusiast Table of 10*: Bring your friends for a great evening \$60 per ticket

- *Wine Lovers Table of 10*: VIP Seating, Table signs, 2 bottles of Cogito wines \$800 (incl \$600 donation)

*Ticket price includes wine and fabulous cheeses and dips and \$50 tax deductible donation.

Bookings: **Chris at**
basfevents@gmail.com
or on **9555-1213**

As we rejoice in the return to the Myanmar Parliament of Aung San Suu Kyi, we remember all the Burmese asylum seekers to whom BASF has provided support in our nine years of existence. They will also be celebrating The Lady's victory and hoping that real democracy may actually return to the country from which they fled.

Thein* is among them. He first became involved in pro-democracy demonstrations in Rangoon in September 1988 after the military seized power and renamed the country Myanmar. Thousands of protestors were killed by the military dictatorship. Thein was arrested, interrogated and imprisoned for over three months. He was released on the condition that he promised not to cause unrest. He refrained from political involvement until the end of 1996, when he got caught up in a demonstration in Rangoon after an attack on a cavalcade which was carrying Aung San Suu Kyi, after her release from house arrest the previous year. Thein was again arrested and imprisoned for another three months. Aware that he was now on a black list, he fled and arrived in Australia in 1997 to ask for refuge.

He spent the next nine years on a succession of bridging visas while pursuing a series of unsuccessful appeals for asylum. BASF volunteers met him in 2003. He had become active in Burmese groups which were supporting Aung San Suu

Kyi's cause, and he also did lots of voluntary work. For Thein it was a very difficult time indeed, not made any easier by the requirement for bi-weekly trips to Immigration Department to renew his Bridging visas, often with Australian officials telling him he would be perfectly safe if he returned to Burma. During that time, he was living with relatives who provided him with his basic accommodation, and it was funds from BASF which made it possible for him to take public transport to Immigration, to meet with his legal advisers and to continue his activities with other Burmese pro-democracy groups, buy phone cards and have access to medical care.

Finally, in 2006, new information came to light in a UN High Commission for Refugees document which proved that he was in danger because of his political profile both in Burma and in Australia, so at last he was given a Permanent Protection Visa in 2007.

Thein is now a happily married Australian citizen, living here without fear of violence or imprisonment, and benefitting the community through his work in aged care. He is very grateful to BASF supporters who provided financial assistance to him for four years.

Thein is one of our many success stories. But there are still others like him — such as Faisal* from Afghanistan, Rajaratnam* from Sri Lanka, Ali* from

Iran, Lee* from Korea — who require our help. So while I sincerely thank all of those kind people who have given donations since our March newsletter, we are still in need of funds

As many of you are aware, our aim at BASF is to provide financial support to around 200 individuals and families each year, with every cent being spent on such things as medical expenses, public transport to urgent appointments, phone cards, and in many recent cases emergency assistance until other accommodation can be found. Generally we require \$380,000 to cover these expenses.

Unfortunately, we have recently been informed by major donors, who have provided nearly \$1 million since we were formed in June 2003, that they are unable to continue to support us. This couple has been extremely generous and without their help we would never have been able to provide financial support to the numbers we have assisted since our inception. We express our enormous gratitude to them and acknowledge the difference they have made to the lives of so many asylum seekers.

It means, however, there will be a substantial reduction in our income, and so we ask you to help us to start the new financial year in a position of strength while making a difference to asylum seekers in real need.

Virginia Walker
Honorary Chairperson
BASF

Homestay — a welcome new program for asylum seekers

The Government's Homestay Program is a welcome initiative to complement the work of the Australian Red Cross in its search for short-term accommodation support to eligible asylum seekers coming out of detention. The decision to issue eligible asylum seekers with bridging visas to live in the community while their claims are being assessed. It's a reform we've waited a long time to see. The program

facilitates short-term accommodation support for asylum seekers, both individuals and families, who are leaving immigration detention until they establish their own living arrangements in the community while their immigration cases are being resolved.

To host an asylum seeker in your home for a six-week period, register with the Australian Homestay Network (AHN).

However we should stress that the need for BASF to provide critical support to asylum seekers will not diminish as the majority of the support we provide extends over a much longer period, especially for people who have been tortured physically and emotionally and are unable to work.

Find out more or register at www.homestaynetwork.org/cpn, or call the AHN on 1300 697 829

Generously supported by:



Thank you to Macquarie Bank staff and Foundation

We are very fortunate to have two socially aware members of Macquarie Bank staff who donate to BASF each week through their work payroll-giving scheme. The Macquarie Bank Foundation matches their donation dollar for dollar to double its impact. As a

result, BASF receives around \$440 each month, which adds up to over \$5000 a year — a substantial sum for making and planning payments to refugee families in desperate need. We are very grateful to these generous supporters and to

Macquarie Bank Foundation.

If your company also has a staff-giving program please consider making BASF your charity of choice each month. A small donation grows larger when matched by your employer's charitable giving program.

If you receive this newsletter by snail mail and would rather receive it by email, please let us know at asylumseekersfoundation@bigpond.com.

Bucket brigades

During this very difficult period we have also raised funds by way of "bucket brigades" at two functions at which we were the "charity of choice" and invited to collect donations.

The City of Sydney Living in Harmony Festival Harmony Day at Sydney Town Hall on March 21 was an ideal event focused on issues of cultural,

racial and religious intolerance by promoting respect, fairness, inclusion and a sense of belonging for everyone and we were delighted to raise \$482 on the day.

Then the Leichhardt Council BluesFest at Lilyfield on March 25 brought quality blues performances from some of Australia's most respected artists to our local community. BASF collected

\$669 from the audience picnicking on the evening who were happy to give a gold coin or more to support refugees.

If you know of an event coming up in your neighbourhood, please suggest BASF as "charity of choice". Get in touch with Virginia Walker for details. It's not only a great day out but brings BASF to the attention of more people.

BASF Donation Form

Bridge for Asylum Seekers Foundation: PO Box 829, Five Dock NSW 2046 T: 9712 7784 M: 0418 261 160

ABN 78 722 539 923

Donations of \$2.00 and over are tax deductible

I enclose a cheque/money order or credit card details for a donation of: \$ _____

Name: _____ Phone: _____

Address: _____

Email: _____

Visa or MasterCard. No: _____

Name on card _____

Expiry Date: ____/____/____ 3 digit security no. ____ Signature: _____

Direct deposit to: UnitingCare-Bridge for Asylum Seekers Fndt, BSB: 634 634 Account no: 100028813.

To ensure that you receive a tax-deductible receipt, please email your name and address, the date of the deposit and the amount deposited to asylumseekersfoundation@bigpond.com