



Bridge for Asylum Seekers Foundation

UnitingCare NSW.ACT

Newsletter
September 2007

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Hard though it is to believe, the Foundation which on 11 June 2003 came into being with what many considered completely unfounded optimism is now four years old, with supporters extending beyond NSW borders and recognition from bodies such as the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission.

We continue to provide financial assistance to 72 adults and 32 children and youths on Bridging Visa Es each month, allowing them some dignity while they wait for their claims to be finalised. Recently we have received applications from more families, some including pregnant women or women with young babies.

To our great delight, a number of our recipients have received Permanent Protection Visas in the past three months and no longer require our assistance because they are now able to support themselves in the community.

Among them has been a Burmese man who received a Permanent Protection Visa recently and last year married an Australian citizen who was formerly from Burma. Another man who was recently granted Permanent Protection status was a stateless Kuwaiti who had been in Australia for nine years and had been released from Villawood in April 2003. A Vietnamese family of six was also granted Permanent Protection status recently. This family came to me in early 2004 requesting financial assistance.

CDSE Funding

Under NSW legislation, registered clubs are required to allocate a certain proportion of the takings from poker machines to worthy charities, such as BASF, as part of the Community Development Support Expenditure Scheme (CDSE Scheme). Kate Maclurcan, the Asylum Seeker Project Co-ordinator, prepares the submissions on our behalf to councils who co-ordinate the submissions for

the various clubs in their municipalities. The clubs' committee members then decide how to allocate the funds to different charities.

We are pleased to report that this calendar year we have been even more successful in applying for grants under this program than in previous years. Thus far we have received a total of \$80,800 from the following clubs:

- Canterbury Bulldogs League Club - \$17,000
- Auburn RSL Club - \$12,000
- Canada Bay Club - \$11,000
- Merrylands RSL Club - \$10,000
- Wests Ashfield Club - \$7,000
- Parramatta Leagues Club - \$3,300
- Harbord Diggers Club - \$3,000
- Wests Sports Club - \$3,000
- Pittwater RSL Club - \$2,500
- Club Ashfield - \$2,000
- Earlwood-Bardwell Park RSL Club - \$2,000
- Hornsby RSL Club - \$2,000
- Burwood RSL Club Ltd - \$2,000
- Randwick Labor Club - \$2,000
- Asquith League Club Ltd - \$1,000
- South Sydney Juniors Rugby League Club - \$1,000

In many cases we have already been able to express our gratitude in person, when I have attended the cheque presentations on behalf of the Management Committee of the Foundation. Kate has accompanied me on several occasions as has Susan Meyer, a member of our Management Committee. This has also given us further opportunity to make a wide section of the community familiar with the work we do.

Special Donations

Two major donors have also made invaluable contributions during the year. The Robert Christie Foundation, a benevolent fund supporting groups such as ours, has provided two donations of \$50,000. One was granted in the 2006 financial year and the other in the 2007 financial year. We are ex-

Volunteers' Meeting

Sunday, 23 September 5.00 -6.30pm
at Circle Café, 344 Darling Street, Balmain.

Join us for a glass of orange juice or wine to discuss volunteer roles such as administration, web/database maintenance, refugee support and fundraising. We would like to assign volunteers to these roles at the meeting and also discuss how to support our volunteers. Let us know of your interest in volunteering even if you can't make it to the meeting.

RSVP to Susan at asylumseekers@gmail.com or by phone on 9555-1213 or 0418-226-231.

tremely grateful to the Robert Christie Foundation for this vital support.

We also wish to extend gratitude publicly to an anonymous donor who has continued to provide substantial donations since August 2003.

Needless to say, we also wish to thank all of our regular supporters whose donations – all of which undoubtedly loom large in your individual budgets – make it possible for us to continue our work.

This year we have been promised \$15,000 by Leichhardt Council and \$10,000 by Marrickville Council in their continued support of the Asylum Seeker Project Co-ordinator's role. We once again thank both councils.

Acting from the Heart

During Refugee Week a major part of our activities revolved around the launch of *Acting for the Heart*. This book is a compilation of stories, cartoons and poems by refugee activists, including Frances Milne and myself, edited by Professor Louise Newman (psychiatrist and BASF patron) and Dr Sarah Mares (psychiatrist). The royalties from book sales are going to BASF, which is very pleasing.

Report from Asylum Seeker Project Coordinator—Kate Maclurcan

World Refugee Day and Refugee Week 17-23 June

The Refugee Council of Australia launched the week in the Rocks. BASF set up a book stall selling copies of *Acting From the Heart*. So far we have sold close to 200 copies. Kate and Virginia were guest speakers at events at Leichhardt and Waverley Libraries and at Newtown Neighbourhood Centre. Leichhardt Council staff raised funds via a Mufti Day and our collection tins at Circle Café and elsewhere reminded shoppers of Refugee Week.

Who is That Refugee?

Our morning tea forum in the Sydney Mechanics School of Arts on 20 June - World Refugee Day, saw 100 supporters gather to listen to refugee Amir Mesrinejad's moving story, performances by Actors for Refugees, readings from *Acting From the Heart* by Dr Sarah Mares and Ngareta Rossell, a song from Kate and a delightful interview between our MC 'Rampaging Roy' John Doyle and cricket great and refugee advocate Ian Chappell. Thanks to all who gave their time so willingly and to City of Sydney for their generous sponsorship.

Order Your Copy of *Acting from the Heart*

Australian advocates for asylum seekers tell their stories in this very moving and significant book which so clearly documents a very dark time in our country.

Copies ordered directly through us provide us not only with the royalties but also the wholesaler's discount. Copies are \$24.95 each with postage of \$5 for up to three books and \$10 for more than three. Please use the donation form below and mark it "Book order".

Coming Events

We Will be Remembered for This

Free film screening at Mosman Council Chambers, hosted by the Mayor of Mosman. MC for the evening is author and media personality Peter FitzSimons. The screening will be followed by a question and answer session with the filmmaker, Jessie Taylor. Wine and cheese will be provided.

Be there for the Sydney premiere of this extraordinary and reflective film, which records the reactions of a group of disparate young people who visited Baxter Detention Centre last year. The story is interspersed with comments from Julian Burnside QC and former Prime Minister,

Malcolm Fraser. Monday, 3 September, 6.00 for 6.30pm. For bookings call 9978 4061 or email s.jackson@mosman.nsw.gov.au.

Spring Soiree

Join us on Mosman Bay! Jim and Philippa Davern welcome you to drinks around the grand piano on Friday, 19 October 6-8pm. \$50 per head. For bookings call Kate on 9810 5826 or email building.bridges@hotmail.com.

Please see the Bridge for Asylum Seekers Foundation website for more event details at www.asylumseekersfoundation.com.

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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

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