

## VICE PRESIDENT'S REPORT

March/April 2023

In Jeff's absence Lucinda Held meetings with Tim Gray (SSI) and Madan Narayanamurthy (Mosaic) to catch up on developments in these organisations.

### **Meeting with Tim Gray SSI 22 March, 2023**

Tim reported that:

1. Families are continuing to arrive at a steady rate but with some bigger groups. 150-200 will arrive this year. In Armidale all the arrivals are Ezidis from Northern Iraq. Early settlement is proceeding smoothly and the housing situation has eased but there was a need to find houses for large groups of arrivals and larger families.
2. The doctor shortage is still a real concern. Some families complaining that the doctors don't bulk bill.
3. SSI hosted an impromptu barbeque for Harmony day and almost 300 Ezidis came.
4. SSI has a bi lingual worker now, Sahira Khudeda. Saves using TIS interpreting service. SSI is looking for an additional case worker if anyone knows of a suitable person who might be interested.
5. He will be on paternity leave for 11 weeks from 1 May.

Tim asked us to let Volunteers know that if they know of families who have relatives /friends coming to Australia who want to come to Armidale rather than go to the town arranged that it is all right for them to ask ahead as Immigration are fairly flexible making those changes ahead of time. Better to do it ahead of arrival as they will still receive full settlement services but if they move after arrival they not get full service at the new town.

6. Also Tim has heard of one family in Coffs Harbour who travelled to Iraq and they were warned by Immigration that they should come back without delay or their visas could be cancelled. So Immigration is keeping track and people should be careful about returning to Iraq.

### **Meeting with Madan Narayanamurthy Mosaic 23 March**

1. Madan is organizing information session on services available to people. This is important as many of the Ezidii community will soon have been here for 5 years and under Mosaic rules would in normal circumstances be considered no longer eligible to receive settlement services. The sessions will be at the library and not delivered through TAFE. A session on Citizenship applications was well attended, but a briefing from the Care Navigator at Healthwise was not.

He suggested Sanctuary might like to hold one of these sessions to tell the community what it offers in the way of assistance and what it normally would not help with.

2. **Citizenship application sessions.** Mosaic will host information sessions on Fridays for people who want to have their applications and documents checked. People will need book in for a time to have their applications and documents checked before lodging them. Madan asked if a Sanctuary member would be available to help with form filling. Sessions will be held over 3 months and volunteers should be available for 2 hours. They will start after the Easter School holidays and people would normally have about 30 minutes allotted to him them.

Lynne Paine of Legal aid will hold information sessions on Citizenship at the end of the end of April and people can also make appointments with her.

**3. Assistance with funds for the Homework Centre** I have asked Madan to give us more information on the Homework Centre Budget and a document on Mosaic letterhead before we approach possible donors.

4. He will follow up on with **Community radio** about the possibility of an Ezidi program which could involve some media training for young people.

5. They are still looking for volunteers who could help Ezidi businesses with Book Keeping. I suggested that Rotary clubs could have retired accountants and others who might be willing to help.

6. Mosaic has received funding for the Regional Employment Agricultural Project for the next 2 years until June 2025. They are now advertising for 2 new positions.

- Project Lead - <https://www.seek.com.au/job/66405737>
- Ezidi Agricultural Project Worker - <https://www.seek.com.au/job/66406016>

The project has been a great success thanks to Rotary and the individuals who contributed the land and the infrastructure. The project will be used as a model for future projects elsewhere.

### **Quarterly HSPN meeting 31 March**

The quarterly HSPN meeting was attended by a number of SSI staff from Sydney as well as the usual large number of participants from different agencies. SSI marked 5 years of its establishment in Armidale with the launch of the final report of Sue Watts on Armidale Community attitudes to Refugee Settlement

Tim Gray gave an update on arrivals. From November 2022 to February 2023 67 people arrived, with a further 82 expected between March and May.

### **Meeting with the NSW Anti Slavery Commissioner.**

Following the HSPN meeting Tim Gray convened a gathering to meet with James Cockayne who took up his post in January and is the first Commissioner in Australia. He has an extensive biography in the field of modern slavery. He is interested in investigating instances of modern slavery such as forced labour, and trafficking. He was interested in the Ezidi experience. Salam Qaro from STARTTS explained how the ongoing plight of Ezidis in Iraq, including air attacks by Turkey on areas of Kurdistan has a continuing impact on the Ezidi community here.

### **Meeting with SSI Community Engagement Officer Kat O'Neill.**

Lucinda also had a meeting with the SSI Community Engagement Officer who was up for the HSPN meeting. The meeting was essentially just to touch base and confirm there were no ongoing issues. Kat was happy for the arrangement for SSI to obtain police checks for Sanctuary members to continue. She not aware Sanctuary had signed an MOU 5 years ago.

### **Women's swimming group**

Kristy O'Neill has advised that the DSISPA funding will finish this financial year and that the funding for the next 2years will be provided by Primary Health Network. (PHN). The session will be open to a wider group of women. It will be adult women only, be for recreational purposes and will not include swimming lessons. As the numbers may get to 30 women or more there will be a dedicated female lifeguard. However volunteers are still welcome. Kristy convened a meeting attended by SSI, Mosaic and Lucinda to discuss these matters on 4 April.