

Armidale Sanctuary

President's Report – March 2023

Projects and activities:

Recognition of the Ezidi language:

On 14 Feb I wrote to the Chair of the NAATI Board (the National Accreditation Authority for Translators and Interpreters), asking them to reconsider the decision not to recognise the Ezidi language for the purpose of training and employment of interpreters. (Officials from the Dept of Home Affairs and Multicultural NSW, as well as Adam Marshall, were also copied into the message.) I emphasised the communication difficulties cited by service providers. I also pointed out that one reason the Ezidi language is not mentioned in sources such as Wikipedia and Britannica (see last month's report) is that the Ezidis, as a small marginalised ethnic group with little literacy, have not been able to write their own story on the internet.

Following Salam Qaro's suggestion, on 27 Feb we applied to the ISO 639-3 Registration Authority <https://iso639-3.sil.org> (associated with the International Organization for Standardization) for the Ezidi language to be recognised and given its own internationally recognised 3 letter code. If successful, this would certainly help the case for recognition by NAATI. In this application, we refer to the language as "Shingali". This refers to area of Iraq where it is spoken (Shingal, the Ezidi name for Sinjar), where nearly all the Ezidis in Australia come from. The reasons for using this name as well as "the Ezidi language" are that Ezidis from other places do not speak this language, and that a small number of non-Ezidis in Sinjar do speak it.

News:

New Arrivals

Three new Ezidi families arrived in February, consisting of 22 individuals. Another 9 families (51 individuals!) are due to arrive later in March.

Requests for volunteers

Now that Ezidis have been in Armidale for many years, the types of requests for volunteers that Sanctuary is getting are very different to those from the early days. First, as some Ezidis are starting their own businesses, there are requests for help with bookkeeping. Second, as some have started courses at UNE, there are requests for tutoring to help students with their studies. If you or anyone you know is interested in one of these volunteer roles, please contact me jsiegel@une.edu.au and I'll pass the message on to our hard-working volunteer coordinators, Kerry Dunne and Astrid Knirsch.

Meetings attended:

New England Multicultural Interagency Meeting, 24 February 2023

(This is a large meeting of representatives from service providers and volunteer organisations that work with culturally and linguistically diverse people in our region. It occurs 4 times a year, alternating between Armidale and Tamworth.)

- The good news was reported that there is now a permanent visa pathway for the approximately 19,000 asylum seekers in Australia holding temporary visas (TPV and SHEV). The government has committed to processing all 19,000+ applications for the new Resolution of Status visa (RoS) within 12 months.

- Also reported (although not relevant to Sanctuary): From 160,000 to 190,000 invitations have gone out for people to apply for the Skilled Independent visa (subclass 189). This is in comparison to approximately 30,000 invitations for the Skilled Work Regional visa (subclass 491). The 189 visas will be given priority, with processing times of 3-6 months, compared to up to 30 months for the 491 visas.
- The guest speaker (by Zoom) was Marilyn Bellett, the Community Engagement Officer for Multicultural NSW's Regional Engagement Program (REP). Its aim is to build connections and work with communities in the various regions of NSW. For more info, or to get involved, go to <https://multicultural.nsw.gov.au/regional-engagement-program/>.
- Good performance on the IELTS English proficiency test is required for immigrants by tertiary institutions and many employers. The need for the test to be offered in Armidale (at UNE) was discussed. (Currently, people have to go Brisbane or Sydney to sit the test.)
- New England Family Support Service is holding the Regional Child, Youth and Families Conference 2023 on 22 and 23 March at the Armidale Bowling Club. Tickets are available at: https://www.stickytickets.com.au/ltosl/regional_child_youth_and_families_conference_2023.aspx

Again, many thanks to all Sanctuary members for your involvement and support.

Jeff Siegel
President