

Armidale Sanctuary

President's Report – November 2023

News:

Citizenship Test:

Some Ezidi people have now been able to sit for the Citizenship Test in Armidale. There have been a few glitches in the administration of the test, but hopefully the wrinkles will be ironed out soon.

Farewell to Mosaic member:

Mosaic's long-serving Settlement Caseworker, Aghasan Saleem, will be leaving the organisation after 15 November. We thank Aghasan for her collaboration with Sanctuary and wish her all the best.

Projects and activities:

Community Sponsorship of Refugees:

As announced last month, the family being sponsored by the Armidale Sanctuary Community Supporter Group (CSG) in the CRISP (the Community Refugee Integration and Settlement Pilot) program will arrive in Armidale on 23 November.

The family of 7 (parents and 5 children, aged 5–14) are from Syria. They were displaced by the war there and have been refugees in Lebanon since 2012. Unlike for previous refugees who have come to Armidale, the government is not providing any support. In the CRISP program, this is provided by the community.

The Sanctuary CSG has been busy arranging, housing, medical care, schooling, banking and signing up with Services Australia (formerly Centrelink). SSI (Settlement Services International) has kindly agreed to provide one of their houses for the first month the family is here (but the CSG is responsible for paying the rent). We have also received generous donations of a fridge, washing machine and furniture, including a dining table and chairs and a sofa.

We still need a 2-3 seater lounge, 2 or more lamps, 3 or more bedside tables/side tables, 5 single bed mattresses and 4 single bed frames, 1 queen mattress and 1 queen sized bed frame, queen sheets, single bed sheets, queen/king blankets, 5 single/double bed blankets, 7 pillows, plates, bowls, cutlery, sharp knives, pots and pans and other kitchen utensils, coffee cups, glassware, kettle, teapot, tea towels, microwave, sheets and blankets, towels, bathmats, laundry basket, clothes drying rack, clothes dryer, a smart phone and a computer.

If you can help, please contact me jsiegel@une.edu.au or our furniture coordinator Katherine van Ekert katherine.van.ekert@gmail.com.

We will also be responsible for supporting the family financially for the first few weeks until they start receiving payments from Services Australia. To pay for all this, we have launched the Issa Family Appeal. Information on how to donate is in the attachment accompanying this report.

Film Night fundraiser

A film evening fundraiser was held on 31 October at the Armidale Playhouse to launch the Issa Family Appeal. Thanks to all of you who attended and made donations, Unfortunately, attendance was a bit short of our expectations. But you can see the film, Captains of Za'atari, on SBS on Demand <https://www.sbs.com.au/ondemand/movie/captains-of-zaatari/2178364483950>. If you couldn't get to the launch, how about having a look and making a donation?

Code of conduct meeting

Sanctuary hosted a briefing session on 26 October aimed at new and prospective volunteers. About a dozen people attended. I gave a short history of Armidale Sanctuary. Qasim Qasim presented some information about the Ezidi people and their culture. Tim Gray and Monica Jebet from SSI gave an overview of their work and cooperation with Sanctuary. Madan Narayanamurthy from Mosaic did the same. Lucinda Wright and Fay Paris talked about the Homework Centre and Home Reading Program, and went through our Volunteers' Code of Conduct. There was also time for questions and answers. Another session will be held early next year.

Meetings

MCDT (Multicultural Community Development Team), 13 October (this is a monthly meeting of all the organisations working with the Ezidi Community). Reports include the following:

STARTTS (NSW Service for the Treatment and Rehabilitation of Torture and Trauma Survivors): (1) They are now sponsoring 14 volleyball teams and 3 teams in Twilight Soccer with many new arrivals participating. (2) A camping trip to Port Macquarie for young adults was organised in September and an outing to Green Valley in October. (3) The women's group (ages 18–60) is starting up again, and other group for younger women (18–35) will be established to concentrate on health issues. (4) There is still no progress in hiring a counsellor for Armidale

IEC (Intensive English Centre at Armidale Secondary College): The IEC now has 36 students in 4 classes, with a wide range of backgrounds in English.

SSI (Settlement Services International): Five or six new Ezidi families are due to arrive in October and November.

TAFE: (1) A new English class been started this term. Some newcomers have joined this class while others have joined existing classes; many are attending over a few days rather than 5 hours in one day. (2) Some long-term students have gone into furniture making and automotive courses. (3) A 25 hour course on citizenship has started. (4) Next year there will be an English course integrated with hospitality. (5) They are recruiting for more casual English teachers,

New England Family Support Service: One third of the families in their home-tutoring program are Ezidis. They now have 8 funded programs and 23 staff, including Qasim Qasim (a member of the Sanctuary Committee).

Mosaic:, 23 and 31 October, with Lucinda and Madan Narayanamurthy:

The following issues were among those discussed with Madan on 23 Oct: (1) Two Sanctuary volunteers are now on call to help people fill out citizenship applications. (25 Ezidis got their citizenship at the last ceremony in Armidale.) (2) The problem of transport to the Homework Centre has been resolved with help from SSI and relatives in the Ezidi community. (3) The monthly men's group would like volunteers to attend. Madan will let us know the times and dates. (4) The project leader of the REAP (Rural Education Employment Project) was due to speak at TAFE.

On 31 Oct we met with four members of the Mosaic Board, based in Sydney, who were visiting Armidale. They were interested in finding out more about Sanctuary and exploring future areas of cooperation.

Thanks again to Armidale Sanctuary supporters and volunteers.

Jeff Siegel
President