

Armidale Sanctuary

President's Report – October 2023

News:

Citizenship Test: Success!

Ezidis and other people in Armidale applying for Australian Citizenship will no longer have to travel to Tamworth to take the Citizenship Test. Sanctuary's campaign to have the test administered locally has paid off, and it will now be available at the Armidale office of Services Australia (formerly Centrelink). Some members of the Ezidi community have already been given appointments for the test here instead of Tamworth. Thanks go to Matthew Teece at Services Australia, the Armidale Regional Council, Salam Qaro and Mirza Hammo at STARTTS and our local Federal member, Barnaby Joyce, for their support in this campaign.

Community Sponsorship of Refugees: Syrian family to arrive in November!

Things have moved quickly in the past month. The Armidale Sanctuary Community Supporter Group (CSG) has been assigned a family in CRISP (the Community Refugee Integration and Settlement Pilot) program <https://refugeesponsorship.org.au/what-we-do/crisp/>. And their travel to Armidale has been booked for 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. The father worked in farming, and the family hoped they would be resettled in a rural area.

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. So, over the next 6 weeks, members of the Sanctuary CSG will have heaps of work, arranging, housing and accessing furniture, appliances, bedding and clothing. When the family arrives, we be responsible for supporting the family financially for the first few weeks, and helping them get access to Services Australia, banking, education and a GP.

Soon we will begin a fundraising campaign to pay for all this. As announced last month, the campaign will be launched with a showing of Captains of Za'atari at 6 pm on 31 October at the Armidale Playhouse. <https://www.theguardian.com/film/2021/nov/29/captains-of-zaatari-review-endearing-refugee-camp-football-doc> .

We are hoping that the wider Sanctuary membership will support this initiative. Our CGS's deputy convenor, Michael Walsh, will be sending out more detailed information later. But meanwhile, if anyone knows any Syrians living in Armidale, could you please put me in contact with them. jsiegel@une.edu.au

Other projects and activities:

2023 Human Rights Lecture

The Annual Sanctuary Human Rights Lecture was held on 14 September. The approximately 80 people who attended heard the President of the Human Rights Commission, Emeritus Professor Rosalind Croucher give an informative and entertaining talk on "Making rights a reality: The need for a Human Rights Act in Australia". Big thanks go to the members of HRL subcommittee for their sterling organisation of the event.

Code of conduct meeting

Sanctuary is hosting a briefing session covering our volunteers' Code of Conduct and presenting some introductory information about the Ezidi people and their culture. Representatives from various service providers for the Ezidi community, such as SSI, Mosaic and STARTTS. will also be invited to talk about their work. The session will be on Thursday 26 October at 3.45 pm in the Drummond Public library. New volunteers are encouraged to attend, as well as supporters considering volunteering. But the session is open to all.

Meetings

None to report! (I was overseas for 3 weeks during the last month, and fortunately no important meetings were scheduled during that period.)

Thanks again to Armidale Sanctuary supporters and volunteers.

Jeff Siegel
President