

# Armidale Sanctuary

## President's Report – February 2024

Belated Happy New Year. It's been a quiet time, so not much to report. (And no meetings!)

### News:

Both Committee member Liz Ellis and I have been appointed to the Regional Community Network (RCN) for New England and Northwest. This is one of 10 RCNs established to provide advice and guidance to Multicultural NSW. Members are selected for their knowledge, expertise and influence on issues relating to cultural diversity in their regions.

### Projects and activities:

#### Community Sponsorship of Refugees:

We have heard back from Community Refugee Sponsorship Australia (CRSA, the organisation administering the CRISP program) that they are implementing some of the suggestions we provided late last year for refinements to the program.

Meanwhile, we have put all the furniture and other household items donated for the Issa family into storage and are awaiting information the next refugee family who will arrive in Armidale.

The Sanctuary Community Supporter Group for the CRISP program is looking for new members to help us work with this family. I'll be sending out an email about this.

#### Sponsorship of Afghan refugees:

I have just heard from one of the Afghan families that we have sponsored for Humanitarian Visas. This is a family of 6 (parents and 4 young children) who had escaped to Pakistan. (We submitted their application in February 2022, but no decision has been made yet.) In September 2023, the government of Pakistan started deportation of Afghan refugees, illegally and forcefully. As a result the family went back to Kabul. For the first 2 months the father (who is a journalist) hid himself from friends and avoided social media. But he was secretly writing for an underground news agency opposing the Taliban regime. In December, the Taliban found him and took him in for questioning. Luckily he was using a new mobile phone, and they didn't find anything about his work. He was taken into custody again in January, and accused of working for the news agency, but again he was released. He is now trying to find a way to go back to Pakistan, but it is very difficult.

#### Book launch:

Some of you may remember Robin Jones, one of the founders of Armidale Sanctuary and President for several years. She also spent time living in refugee camps in both Uganda and Thailand. The presence of the large Ezidi community in Armidale is largely due to her success in lobbying for Armidale to become a designed refugee settlement location.

Robin moved to Queensland a few years ago and has been working on a book about her amazing life: *From Cabbages to Nan: Memoirs of a Humanitarian*. The book is being launched at a dinner at the Armidale Bowling Club on 23 April, 5.30 pm for 6. The cost is \$25. Robin will be there and the book will be on sale. Armidale Sanctuary is getting a table or two together. If you are interested, please contact me [jsiegel@une.edu.au](mailto:jsiegel@une.edu.au)

*Jeff Siegel*  
President