

Armidale Sanctuary

Vice President's Report – June 2024

As Jeff is away on a well deserved break I am sending out the monthly report.

The highlight of the month was Sanctuary's annual Human Rights lecture which was held on 30 May. This year we tried a new venue at the Armidale Playhouse and that was a great success. The Speaker Elijah Buol, himself a former refugee, filled the hall and held our attention with his accounts of his childhood during the Civil War in South Sudan, losing his mother in the fighting and then his father before he was 10. After years in a refugee camp he came to Australia aged only 16. Despite this difficult start in life he completed his university studies and holds a Masters in Law and a Masters in Justice in Intelligence and is completing a Doctor of Law at ANU. He has held various positions on Community and Ethnic bodies and was named the Queensland Local Hero in 2019. In February he was appointed CEO of Act for Peace, an organization that aims to empower people displaced by conflict and disasters across the globe. His talk, 'Building Unity through Hope: Creating a more Compassionate Society' was well illustrated by references to his own experiences as well as an account of the work of Act for Peace. Lina Almuhamma gave Elijah a book of Photos of New England on behalf of Sanctuary. We raised just over \$1000 in donations. It is worth a reminder that a lot of work goes into the annual talk, both in finding a suitable speaker and venue as well as arranging a program and plenty of publicity. A big thankyou to the subcommittee that made the talk and Elijah's visit a great success.

In addition to giving his talk Elijah accompanied Jeff to the quarterly Humanitarian Settlement Program Network meeting of local settlement agencies as well as representatives from TAFE, employment and health agencies. The main focus of the agenda was employment as well as a presentation from the NSW Multicultural Centre for Women's and Family Safety. SSI reported that there were 40 new refugee arrivals people had between February and April and a further 28 were expected in May.

Elijah also visited the Armidale Secondary school and gave a talk to some of the students as well as giving an interview with Armidale Community Radio.

I attended the monthly meeting Sanctuary holds with STARTTS. This meeting is also attended by our Volunteer Coordinators as Sanctuary receives quite a few referrals of people needing a volunteer to help them with English practice and social interaction from STARTTS. Unfortunately there is still no resident Counsellor in Armidale and a Counsellor visits from Newcastle.

The Annual General Meeting was held on 8 May and annual reports for the past year were submitted by Jeff as President, Astrid and Kerry as Volunteer Coordinators and Maurice Anker as Treasurer. Sanctuary's membership and bank balance are both in a healthy state with total funds of 32,453.53 held. We continue to welcome new members and volunteers but unfortunately the number of requests from people needing additional help from a volunteer continue to outnumber the volunteers available.

Please note that the Committee is largely the same with Jeff and myself continuing as President and Vice President, Maurice Anker as Treasurer, Pat Marson as Secretary, Luise Ashley as Membership Secretary, and Valerie Dalton as our Publicity and Media Officer. The big change is that Astrid Knirsch and Kerry Dunne have stepped down as Volunteer Coordinators. They have been replaced by Carol Mackerras and Sarah Johnstone. Sarah and Carol are reviewing our procedures for receiving referrals

as well as our members data base where the volunteer requests and allocation are kept. Kerry and Astrid will continue to assist in the background as part of the handover process.

Lucinda Wright,

Vice President