

Armidale Sanctuary

President's Report – May 2024

Projects and activities:

Community Sponsorship of Refugees:

Still waiting to be given a date for the arrival of the family from the Democratic Republic of Congo.

We have finally been able to get all the furniture and other household goods we have collected for the family out of paid storage. Anneleis Humphries kindly made space her garage available. And Akram Kudeedah organised Ezidi manpower and transport to move everything, with the help of convenor Michael Walsh. (Akram was formerly the Digital Connections Officer in the project we funded with Mosaic, and now is a uni student and part-time youth worker at Mosaic.)

Book launch/dinner:

The dinner for Robin Jones was held at the Armidale Bowling Club on 23 April, organised by Rotary. There was a large turnout, and her book *From Cabbages to Naan: Memoirs of a Humanitarian* was launched. I was one of speakers and talked about Robin's lasting contributions to Armidale Sanctuary – especially establishing the Human Rights Lecture and lobbying to get Armidale designated as a refugee settlement location.

2024 Human Rights Lecture:

As mentioned last month, the Annual Sanctuary Human Rights Lecture will be on **Thursday, 30 May**, 5.30 for 6 pm at the Armidale Playhouse. The speaker will be **Elijah Buol**.



Mr Buol was recently appointed as CEO of Act for Peace. This organisation empowers people around the world who have been displaced by conflict and disasters.

Our speaker is from South Sudan and was a refugee himself. He lost his parents to conflict when he was a child, and came to Australia in 2002 as a humanitarian unaccompanied minor.

In Australia, Mr Buol earned university qualifications including a Bachelor of Human Services and Master of Law.

He is currently completing a Juris Doctor degree at the Australian National University (ANU).

Mr Buol is the Chairperson of Ethnic Communities Council of Queensland (ECCQ), and a member of the Queensland government's Gambling Advisory Committee and the Federal government's Settlement Advisory Council.

Meetings/Visit:

Meeting with service providers: On 16 April I met with Monica Jebet, Team Leader in Armidale for Settlement Services International (SSI) and Madan Narayanamurthy, Regional Coordinator for Mosaic Multicultural Connections. They reported that local Ezidi woman Lina Almuhamma, is now working casually for both organisations. Also, SSI has hired a new case worker: Vina Joy Puddunan. Two new Ezidi families had arrived that week, one with 9 members and one with 7. The men's group will meet monthly, and funding is being sought for adult men's swimming lessons. Earlier in the month, approximately 20 youth were taken on a trip to Coffs Harbour, where they learned about beach safety and visited the butterfly house.

Meeting with Department of Home Affairs Community Liaison Officers: I was asked to meet Olivier Dreyfus and James Rea while they were visiting Armidale on 30 April. They were most interested in hearing the progress on the recognition of the Ezidi language (which they appear to support). We also discussed the Citizenship Test. While they were happy to hear that many Ezidis in Armidale have been able to pass the test through sheer effort, they are concerned that many others will not be able to pass because of disabilities or trauma. Olivier says that they are working on clarifying the process of getting an exemption from having to take the test because of trauma and other factors.

Visit to the IEC (Intensive English Centre) at Armidale Secondary College: On 2 May, I visited the IEC along with 5 other members of the Committee. The Head Teacher, Carole McKinney showed us around, explained how the Centre works and described the various activities inside and outside the classroom. Then she took us to observe some classes in progress. We were very impressed with the IEC and left with admiration for the administrators, teachers and language workers.

Hope to see you all at Human Rights Lecture on 30 May!

Jeff Siegel
President