

## ARMIDALE SANCTUARY MONTHLY REPORT

OCTOBER-NOVEMBER 2024

### Meetings SSI, STARTTS

Carol McKerras (Volunteer Co-ordinator) and I met with team leaders for STARTTS and SSI during the month. Although we try to schedule regular meetings with these agencies and with MOSAIC to discuss developments in their case loads, concerns and individual cases, it has been some months since we were able to meet. As these agencies often refer families to us who they feel need a volunteer, being able to meet regularly assists us with meeting those requests and gives us an opportunity to put any concerns to them. We hope to instigate a better system of liaising and reporting back to the SSI case officer on families referred to us. To date we have operated more in isolation once the request is put to us and this might enable the families to be introduced by the SSI case officer.

STARTTS is introducing a series of activities designed to help refugee families to find other outlets to express themselves. They have installed a series of planter boxes for gardening programs, choir and music groups and are progressing arrangements with Armidale Community Radio for Ezidis to participate in radio programs and to develop their own language programs to be broadcast to their community. These activities are part of the STARTTS Community Living Supports for Refugees programs which STARTTS runs in addition to their regular Counselling programs. Unfortunately there is no resident Counsellor in Armidale so our refugees rely on visiting counsellors or telehealth.

### Offers of Training programs

Following the meeting with STARTTS Carol and I had a further meeting with Yuhana Nashimi, a mental health counsellor and trainer who gave us information on possible courses that he could arrange for Sanctuary volunteers if there was sufficient interest. These include Suicide Prevention Training, Vicarious Trauma Training and Accidental Counsellor Training. We are investigating the content and cost of these courses before we decide to put them to the membership to see how much interest there.

One of our volunteers has also drawn our attention to workshops on DV being offered by the Womens Shelter. Information is available on their website.

I met with **Tim McLennan, a Phd Student** from Sydney University who is doing research into how students with refugee backgrounds who are doing tertiary study define success and how it can be better evaluated. He was meeting with UNE staff and Ezidi students who are part of the HEPPP program. Since the Ezidis began settling in Armidale we have been contacted by a number of Phd students seeking our input and advice on our experiences and how to approach Ezidis who could assist them with their research.

A reminder that Armidale Council's Jane Davies is organising a **lunch for International Volunteers Day** at the Bowling Club on 4 December and we are all invited. For those who would like to go and who have not already responded please contact me or Jane on 6770 3838, email [jdavies@armidale.nsw.gov.au](mailto:jdavies@armidale.nsw.gov.au) by 22 November.

**End of Year Function.** The Sanctuary Committee is considering holding an end of year function. As yet no decisions have been made on date or venue but if you would like an opportunity to meet with other Sanctuary members and to celebrate our hard work, please let me know.

Lucinda Wright