

Blue Mountains Refugee Support Group Newsletter Feb-March 2015

A Project of the Blue Mountains Family Support Service Inc.
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Australia Honours Graeme Swinson



This delightful photo of Graeme and his dear wife Sue was taken on Australia Day last January when Graeme received his OAM for his services to needy people in countries around the Pacific and for assisting refugee and asylum seekers in our own country. Both Graeme and Sue are active members of the Blue Mountains Refugee Support Group. Since 2011 Graeme has been an advocate for both the BMRSG and Balmain for Refugees. Prior to that he was a Volunteer Member Salvation Army International Development Board, a Volunteer Consultant, Evangelical Alliance of Papua New Guinea and Projects Coordinator, Australian Baptist World Aid.

While working for World Vision: from 1982 – 1994 he was Development Associate, Pacific Development Group, Community Development Specialist, Field Consultant, Sydney Liaison Office, Associate Director Technical Services, South Pacific Field Office, Associate Director Field Development, Asia Regional Office, Added to that he worked with Asia Pacific Christian Mission as State Representative, South Australia and Leadership trainer, Indonesia, What a wonderful record!

At the **Get Together last** Sunday Graeme spoke about his present work with asylum seekers and refugees; researching on their behalf, writing submissions, preparing their documents, resumes and even providing a home for some in need.

He expressed his dismay at the present government's disregard for well researched expert reports which expose the conditions in the detention centres especially those offshore. It is a case of ignoring the content and vilifying the researchers.

News from the Committee Meeting

Treasurer, Michael Morley reported that the Blue Mountains Family Support Service Claim form is being used satisfactorily for all claims for reimbursement of money spent to assist refugees.

Website Update

Take a look at our new look website. It is much easier to navigate thanks to Pat Raynor and Craig Small. George and Wayne are authorised to post material on the website so send your posts to them.

Requests to assist with large dental, medical and optical bills.

It was decided to consider each case individually. Where possible we will seek pro bono assistance. Do you know any professionals who may be able to assist in this way? If so contact George on 4782 7866.

Turning the Tables - Tamil Refugees Generosity



Again Sydney University sought our help to enable some Japanese students meet refugees as part of their course work. Our refugee Tamil friends willingly agreed to cater for the lunch, which was held at Noeline and Paul's home in Katoomba. And what a feast it was! At George's suggestion the University agreed to donate \$500 to cover expenses.

Our Ocean 12 Cricket Team seems to go from triumph to triumph.

Message from Noeline Nagle

"Ocean 12 has occupied much of my time, energy and space for nearly 2 years. Annemarie & I have become totally committed to this delightful group of 15 young men, all with the common bond, love of cricket.

When we started they were a strange bunch of fellows. They wouldn't communicate, were suspicious of the motives of women running a team and generally played a standard of cricket that wasn't very encouraging. It took time, patience and a belief that it would work.

Roll on to March 2015 and we now have a team undefeated in the Parramatta Last Man Stands 20/20 competition. The summer of 2014/2015 has been an unbelievable success and the bunch of individuals we collected nearly 2 years ago are now a well oiled, very happy, confident group of men.

It's not just cricket. We have the privilege of being a part of their world. We help with letters, resumes, and problems. We supply clothes, furniture and above all friendship. We share their stories, worries and dreams. Both Annemarie and I feel the overall well being of this group of Tamils has made a turn for the better. For a few hours a week they can forget their visa problems and take delight in playing a

game they love and sharing the joy with their families back in India or Sri-Lanka.

I would also stress it isn't always easy. Far from it. Sometimes Annemarie and I feel like bashing our heads against a brick wall. However, these dramas always end in smiles. The catch cry "no worries" is now most familiar.

Next Sunday we play the finalist in the Sydney Competition. If we win this we are off to the Gold Coast in November



Make a Statement in one of our Tshirts or Caps



Purchase any one of these from Grant Medaris, 5 Sunland Crescent, Mt Riverview 4739529

T shirts \$25 Polos \$30 Caps \$30

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Refugees

Let's Do Better

Compare Father Frank Brennan
Speakers, Dorothy Hoddinott, two young refugees. Lee
Rhiannan and Phil Glendenning supported by
The Western Sydney Male Voice Choir

Wentworth Falls School of Arts

Sunday 14 May 2015
2.00 pm

Cost Adults \$15 Concession \$10

Afternoon Tea by Donation

**Tickets available Megalong Books, Turning Page,
Glee Books**