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Blue Mountains Refugee Support Group

Newsletter December 2014

A Project of the Blue Mountains Family Support Service Inc.
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‘Peace on Earth and Goodwill to all men’

Villawood Opens its Doors a Little

On Sunday December 14 the Refugee Action Coalition organised a special event to share “compassion, songs of freedom and season’s greetings” with asylum seekers in Villawood. Visitors and detainees alike were provided with a magnificent Afghan meal made by an older Hazara man who has been in Community Detention for over 18 months. The occasion allowed experienced Villawood visitors to introduce their friends to those in the community who had never before been inside a detention centre. One young couple had travelled all the way from Wollongong and others were there from the Central Coast. There were also a number of family groups. The Trade Union Choir sang of hope and freedom. Before the end of the afternoon they had joined in with a Tamil drumming group. It was a joyful experience for all involved, except for the realisation that we would leave to resume our lives but the men and women being detained would continue to be locked away.

Jan Clarence

QuickTime™ and a
decompressor
are needed to see this picture.

Keep Up the Good Work

It is only through diligent persistence that good outcomes occur. We are sure that the letters many on you have been sending to the cross bench senators have led to the changes in the situation re-

garding children in detention. Let us not forget that there are still several hundred children on Nauru, Manus and Christmas Islands, as well as those in detention centres on the mainland. Keep up your letters and phone calls. We must keep reminding all our representatives in Canberra that a very large portion of the population is not happy with the present harsh treatment of Asylum seekers.

Cricket News

Only 15 months ago our cricket team Ocean 12 was formed by Noeline Nagle with the support of Wendy Leagues Club. What a motley lot they seemed at first! All this has changed. After many ups and downs they have finally shown their true colours and won the Parramatta Last Man Stands Summer Competition. Noeline and AnneMarie Cliftons's continued attendance and support has spurred them on to reach this high standard. The men were determined to win and they did.

Two weeks ago one of the men got a hat trick. This Sunday he was presented with the ball mounted on a trophy. He had never seen this before and had no idea this was the tradition. The look on his face was priceless.

Many of the men are also playing in the Saturday grade competition. One of the men has an average to date of 76 and 2 more men have been asked to play for Wendy's First Grade. All this is funded from a grant from Wendy Leagues.

The grant also paid the fees & uniforms for 2 young boys to join Little Athletics. One recently came 2nd in his age group for the State in shot put, discus, 100 metres and relay.

We finish 2014 the way we intend to keep going, having fun, playing as a good team and of course being on top.



Our Successful Asylum Seekers Cricket Team - Ocean 12

Villawood

The Villawood Visitors continue to make weekly visits to the Detention Centre where they find the ongoing unending detention causes much distress. New visitors who are BMRSG members have been inducted. If you wish to join them, contact **Jan Clarence** on **4739 5260** or **0408 711 517**. BMRSG Visitors must be financial members and have signed the *'Working with Children r Declaration'*.

An informal channel of communication has been established with Serco to iron out the restrictions placed on the times children may use their scooters and have access to computers. This latter disadvantages school children. Some small progress has been made.

Our representative is meeting with the Immigration Manager to gain more appropriate measures to assist the three pregnant women in the Hughes Compound.

Employment

Grant Medaris reports that the search for suitable jobs for asylum seekers with work rights continues. Resumes are prepared and reworked to target each job application. Alas the number of asylum seekers on Bridging visas who have had their work rights revoked has increased. Resumes have been forwarded to: Skilled recruitment; *Metroll Pty Ltd*; *Bluescope Steel Pty Ltd*; *All Metal Products Pty Ltd*; *Dunn and Farrugia Pty Ltd*.

Our No Interest Loans (Nils Program)

This program has enabled several men to obtain licences as forklift drivers and two more are applying.

Bright Employment

Bright Employment is now into its sixth training program. Already 17 people have been successfully placed in restaurants and hotels and Bright plans to place 30 more by the end of the year. For 2015 they are hoping to place 150 people. The ABC screened an excellent profile piece on their hospitality training program on the 7.00 pm news a little while ago. Find the story on ABC on-line.

Aaron Magian from *Leaders of Tomorrow* would like to see how his organisation might link in with us and Sarah Earnshaw from *First Advantage Pty Ltd*. is also interested in working with us. This might assist refugees with professional qualifications find more satisfying employment.

Storage and Distribution of Goods

Therese Wachter has returned to full time work and cannot continue to work with Adelaide.

The Committee thanked Therese for all the work she has put into the BMRSG over the past 12 years.

Julie Martin will assist Adelaide in the New Year. Adelaide reminds Visitors that there is a large store of clothing that can be given to refugees. Adelaide's phone numbers 47512578 Mob. 0417 689 331.

***The Management Committee
Wishes You a
Merry Christmas and a Joyful New Year***

Marie Standen Dec., 2014