

The Living in Australia Program

April 2023

The April Living in Australia Program (LAP) - formerly called the Learn English Holiday (LEH) program – was held in the Environmental Centre at Immanuel Lutheran College from 11-15 April. We were very grateful to have the use of such wonderful facilities and the support of several other organisations and people who in different ways have helped us a lot: Community Underwriting, Buddies' public liability insurance provider who gave us a grant to fund both 2023 LAPs; St John's College Nambour, who lends us their bus; Fisheries on the Spit, who give us delicious fish and chips at the beach for a much reduced cost; Wildlife HQ, who make the zoo visit cheaper than normal; the Immanuel Church volunteers and Kendall who provided us with delicious morning teas; Linsey, Ziena, Jemima, Gun and Mu-raay, who took time from their professional roles to share their skills and understanding with us; and both Immanuel College and Matthew Flinders College (and Gayla, Matt, and Kathrin) who encouraged their students to volunteer.

Important as is the assistance of the organisations listed above, it is really people – our teachers, classroom volunteers and homestay hosts - who are key to the LAP meeting its goals of supporting refugees in their adaptation to life in Australia. So what was the experience in April like for our refugee participants, our classroom volunteers and our homestay hosts? What follows is a selection of feedback from the three groups of people.

Refugee participant feedback:

- Everything was 200% perfect.
- I think at the first day you should start with Find Someone Who to break the ice. Hokey Pokey for me was a little awkward.
- Everything was really nice. Thank you so much, I appreciate it.
- I feel more Australian.
- I like to thank you for welcome us with love and smiling faces.
- I really appreciate, and thanks all of you for holding this program, I learned much.
- It's the best week of my life in Australia; A lot of thanks to all the girls organised our comfortable stay and for the knowledge that me will be useful in life here.
- My son was happy to come to your school every day.
- Yes, my son enjoyed a lot and he learned too much things in English.
- On scale of 1-10, my son is 10.
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Classroom volunteer feedback:

What two things gave you most satisfaction?

- Getting to know the participants – spending time just talking and socialising with participants; Seeing how much most of the participants seemed to be enjoying the week and the activities.
- Seeing participants begin to relax, grow in confidence and enjoy themselves; Seeing participants making new friends - with other participants and with volunteers and the organising team – and sharing email addresses.

What did you observe about the learning that took place?

- It was satisfying to see people think they couldn't tackle something but get there in the end. The Iranian girls commented that the culture words would be very useful for them and also made them think about stereotyping. Everyone I worked with 'had a go', seemed pleased with their efforts and will have grown in confidence at least a little.
- It was particularly obvious that learning took place with a) the session on water safety and b) the session on internet safety. This was because in terms of internet safety there was a lively discussion among the group and with water safety the guest I worked alongside altered some of his answers at the end of the session so that his answers were corrected.
- My kids mentioned that they liked the free-flow nature of the [children's] programme (it wasn't overly timetable-bound) and that gave them space and time to interact with the participants in a more natural way, for e.g., going out to play or doing a different activity together.
- I think it's a brilliant program – just the right balance of fun, general and cultural knowledge, and learning, including reading, writing and conversation, along with the beach, dinner and zoo. Couldn't be better!
- I don't think the atmosphere, approach, set-up should change at all – it's perfect! I did not attend all the activities but I particularly enjoyed activities where the participants spoke about their background and personal stories (such as the Art activity) in English so more like that perhaps?
- Thank you to everyone who organises the Living in Australia program so wonderfully and tirelessly and to all the teachers, presenters, morning tea providers, etc. I can only guess at how much work happens before each program and there are always challenges before and during the week. I know that some parents especially enjoyed the experience knowing that their children were being taught, entertained and so well cared for. I always appreciate being given the opportunity to meet the refugees and to participate. It's lovely to see the participants all so happy - well, 99.9% of them anyway!
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Homestay host feedback

What two things gave you most satisfaction?

- Making lovely new friends; Knowing we were giving a happy experience to people who have lost everything through circumstances not in their control.
- Being able to help a family who have had to leave their own country due to conflict; Having a laugh many times, even when the language barrier was there. Perhaps because the language barrier was there!
- Seeing the children flourish; meeting people from various cultural backgrounds.
- Sharing our values and culture with someone from another from a different culture – as well as being tour guide - showing them all the sights and activities; Seeing how much excitement and enjoyment our guest gets from the homestay (and LAP) experiences.

What part of the program did your guests enjoy the most?

- My family seemed to enjoy everything. I don't think I could choose any one part of the program. However, some segments were probably a bit difficult for some participants without translation.
- ALL of it – but definitely the Beach and the ZOO!!
- The games at school. The board games in the evening
- The Cultural evening, which we enjoyed very much as well.
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Other comments

- I would have loved to have a free day with my guests, so I could have showed them a few of the local sites, take a drive up to the range etc. I supposed that isn't something that all hosts could do, as many hosts might also have daytime jobs. Anyway, I plan to have my visitors back for a private weekend soon.

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The next LAP program will be held from 18-22 September at Matthew Flinders Anglican College. See Buddies Bulletin for details closer to the time.