

Buddies Refugee Support Group **ANNUAL REPORT**



2021-22



Annual report 2021–2022

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We acknowledge Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders as the first people of Australia. We acknowledge the language and cultural diversity and traditions that existed in this land for tens of thousands of years before the arrival of the first settlers' fleet. We acknowledge Kabi Kabi and Jinibara Peoples of the hinterland and coast of the Sunshine Coast where Buddies members walk today.

In this spirit of recognition, reconciliation and respect, Buddies members work to create a community fostering belonging, welcome and inclusion.

'Being Buddies to Buddies' was accepted as a phrase which encapsulated our philosophy and at the core of our values; the phrase has now morphed into 'Buddies to All'.



Introduction

Buddies Refugee Support Group Ltd is registered in Queensland as a non-listed public company limited by guarantee. At the AGM of 29 August 2021, Gaynore Stoessel and Paul McKinley offered their resignations as Directors, both resignations being accepted. Paul had finished his 3-year tenure which meant he had to resign (constitutional requirement) but could be re-elected if he chose to do so. Paul was asked to continue as a Director in an advisory role, and he agreed to continue on the Board until early 2022. Gaynore decided to continue as Company Secretary.

Lynda Utting and Len Mangan were willing to stay on as Directors throughout 2022. Sue Berry was elected as a Director at the 2021 AGM meeting but she was unable to continue in the role post-December 2021. Robin Jones also spent a short time as a Director but was unable to continue in that position. The vacant Board positions were advertised and two very competent and worthy Directors were appointed in January 2022, when we welcomed Lua Bruckhoff and Sam McGill.



Buddies Board as at 30 June 2022: From left Lua Bruckhoff, Lynda Utting, Len Mangan and Sam McGill

Clare Arico has generously continued in the role as Treasurer. The members of Buddies thank the Directors, Treasurer, Finance Committee members, Secretary, fundraisers, advocates, educators and all others who contribute to the aims of Buddies for their tremendous work, skills, passion and knowledge.

With the aim of being more transparent and inclusive, the Board has encouraged members to attend Board meetings. The Board has also introduced a new practice of encouraging people who have expressed an interest in becoming a Director to attend at least one Board meeting. Throughout the term of this current Board we had guests at almost half of our monthly meetings.

We have had good attendance at our bi-monthly meeting throughout 2021/2022. This is largely due to the diligent work of Lynda Utting personally contacting members and others via a phone call. The guest speakers, who we have at our meeting, are also a very popular drawcard.

Becoming more plan-driven

During 2021/22 Buddies decided to reset following the disruption caused by the Covid pandemic. We want to be more 'plan-driven', ie we want to avoid being distracted by events as they arise. This frequently can occur at the expense of getting other important things done that have already been agreed to. Being too event-driven also would require us to produce annual and multiple year plans.

As a first step, we produced a calendar of events to assist with planning. We also listed the tasks we'd like to achieve, and identified volunteers who could perform those tasks. Tasks were then categorised into roles. Job descriptions were produced to help volunteers decide if they could perform the roles and we undertook to act as a guide for those taking on the roles. Motivated by the upcoming 2022 Federal Election we decided to focus more on our Advocacy and Education goals.

Buddies' 20th anniversary

Following the appointment of more role Coordinators, we were able to increase our focus on some existing priorities but also identify a few additional tasks that could be achieved. Because 2022 is the 20th anniversary of Buddies, we plan to hold a celebration event in November 2022, and possibly also have a history/book launch on that occasion. Paul McKinlay is coordinating the writing of Buddies History.



Constitution review and School Project

We also commenced a review of the Buddies Constitution. David Hill is coordinating the review with assistance from Glyni Cumming. All of those projects were on track at the time of writing this report. We want to also advocate and educate the community through our School Project (see Mathew Flinders report on page 23) and our Community Groups Project (eg APEX, Lions & CWA). We have been unable to achieve this to date but hopefully we may be able to do something in this area next year.

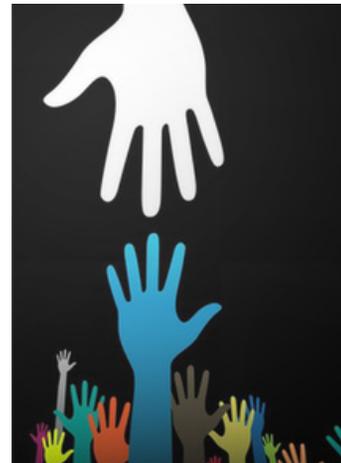
Direct support to refugees/asylum seekers

Individual Buddies members have supported refugees and asylum seekers at a personal and family level for many years with minimal input from Buddies as an organisation. From March 2020, Buddies has been directly supporting two men – one a refugee and the other an asylum seeker – who were seeking personal and professional support. We initially supported them with finances, in-kind and friendly/social support in an *ad hoc* way. We soon realised it would be best to provide professional assistance.

We advertised for a Refugee Engagement Coordinator and we were very grateful when Narelle Matheson applied and subsequently was appointed as our first Coordinator in this role. Narelle came with decades of extensive experience and qualifications to perform the role. Many of us, especially the men seeking assistance, are very grateful for the above-and-beyond approach Narelle applied to the role.

Unfortunately for Buddies, Narelle had to relocate so she was no longer able to perform the role, but again we were very fortunate to engage the services of Tarah Puller. Tarah also comes with extensive experience and is well qualified to perform in the role.

Thank you very much Narelle and Tarah for your selfless commitment to the role of Refugee Engagement Coordinator.



Thank you all

As we end the 2021/2022 year, the Board of Directors are deeply grateful to the many people who continue to strive to assist refugees and seekers of asylum in a myriad of ways. This includes the members of the Finance group – Clare Arico (Treasurer), Dee Williams, Penny Rivlin and Tricia Reade – who work very hard to ensure Buddies’ limited funds are allocated wisely and that our accountability is maintained.

Heartfelt thanks must also go to Wendy Oakley who is the backbone of our media presence, ensuring approximately 1100 people each month receive Buddies’ and refugee-related news through the Buddies Bulletin, as well as maintaining the Buddies website.

Thank you also to Anneliese Broadaway who recently had to resign as our Facebook coordinator after many years of faithfully keeping our presence on FB updated. This role is now being performed by Sam McGill who is proving to be a very capable replacement.

Even though we were unable to hold the LEH program this year the Board and members are always grateful for the contribution the coordinators, teachers, hosts, coaches, mentors and all volunteers make to this Buddies flagship program.

Finally we thank our members for their financial, gift and food donations, as well as their willingness to volunteer to attend and support events and meetings. We appreciate their efforts to encourage others to take a stand against those policies that, intentionally or unintentionally, cause unnecessary pain and suffering to those who already have so very little.

Buddies – still making a difference

During 2021/22, despite difficulties in many aspects, Buddies continued to make a difference through fundraising events and activities, community engagement and education programs, and by providing much-needed financial support to individuals and the organisations that coordinate support to the most vulnerable members of our community – people seeking asylum with no income support.

Our work builds the capacity of the communities we work with and live within to connect with the stories of real people affected by policy decisions. These collective efforts have enabled us to slowly challenge the myth, and change the negative narrative surrounding people seeking asylum.

“ Our work builds the capacity of the communities we work with and live within to connect with the stories of real people affected by policy decisions ”

This annual report provides a summary outline of the activities and initiatives that have taken place during the year.

Buddies' mission

“ We advocate for the just and compassionate treatment of refugees and asylum seekers, consistent with the international human rights standards that Australia helped develop and has endorsed.

We support policies towards refugees and asylum seekers that reflect respect, decency and traditional Australian generosity to those in need, while advancing Australia's international standing and national interests.”

Buddies' values (Buddies to all)

Respect – for everyone's human rights

Compassion – for those suffering discrimination and persecution

Generosity – to help those in need

Welcome – to those from somewhere else



What we do

Community awareness, advocacy and education

We seek the truth about refugees and asylum seeker issues in Australia and make this public through meetings and forums, talks to schools and community groups, our monthly newsletter, website and social media.

We lobby politicians and other decision-makers, and use publicity to advocate for the just and compassionate treatment of refugees and asylum seekers.

Hospitality

We get to know refugees and people seeking asylum living in south-east Queensland. We offer practical support to new arrivals. We provide people seeking asylum and refugees with advice and assistance to access professional services including legal, medical and allied health services.

Fundraising

We raise funds and provide direct financial assistance to refugees and people seeking asylum and to the advocacy and support organisations they rely on.

LOBBYING

2022 was a federal election year so Buddies members were kept busy lobbying politicians via emails, signing petitions and face-to-face meetings with politicians.

One example of this was when Buddies Directors Len Mangan (at right), Sam McGill and other community representatives met with Senator Kristina Keneally for a round table discussion prior to the May 2022 election.



WHAT WE DO

Community awareness, advocacy and education

“ When the world is silent, even one voice becomes powerful. ”

– Malala Yousafzai,
Pakistani activist



Communications

The Bulletin

Wendy Oakley continues to publish The Bulletin rain, hail or shine, and it continues to be one of Buddies' most important communication tools. Distributed by email, the Bulletin provides Buddies with an opportunity to share issues and policies affecting refugees and asylum seekers and promote activities for fundraising, support and advocacy.

<https://www.refugeebuddies.org/bulletins-current-year>



Web

Wendy Oakley continues to manage and maintain our website. Buddies thanks Wendy for her expertise and dedication.

<https://www.refugeebuddies.org>



Facebook

Anneliese Broadaway has performed as Administrator of our Facebook page. This role is now performed by Sam McGill, and we thank Anna and Sam for their involvement in this form of Buddies' communication, despite their very busy lives!

<https://www.facebook.com/BuddiesRefugeeSupportGroup/>



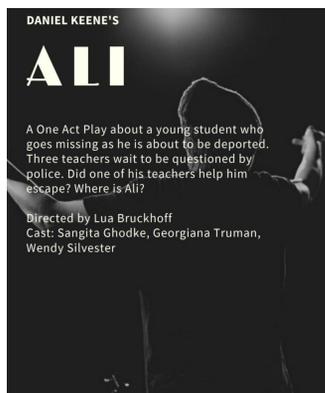
EVENTS in 2021-2022

Harmony Day 2022

On 20 March 2022 as part of Harmony Week 2022, Buddies co-ordinated a special event – a one act play entitled 'ALI'.

In collaboration with the Sunshine Coast Multicultural Network (SCMN) and with support from the Sunshine Coast Council and Queensland Government, attendees shared in what was a very different Buddies event. The writer and actors kept the audience riveted as they took us on a very emotional and real experience – teachers discussing their involvement in the process following the disappearance of one of their students.

The play was followed by a unique experience facilitated by Director Lua Bruckhoff (also a Buddies Director), leading us through a unique Q&A session. This involved audience interaction with the actors as they acted out the emotions, feelings and thoughts raised.



We thank playwright Daniel Keene, Director Lua Bruckhoff and actors Sangita Ghadke, Georgiana Truman and Wendy Silvester. They donated all or part of their usual fees, and we also received a \$356 grant from the Queensland Government to assist with covering costs.

The night was a great success, with all in attendance overwhelmed by the experience. We are sure that people's knowledge and understanding was advanced as a result of their experience.

In addition to the educational and community networking benefits, the night also raised much needed funds, new members and signups for the Bulletin.



Actors Wendy Silvester (left) & Georgiana Truman

“ The writer and actors kept the audience riveted as they took us on a very emotional and real experience ”

Refugee Week 2022



Lesley Willcoxson coordinated another 'experience with a difference' for all those who attended the Buddies Refugee Week event on 26 June 2022.

Three refugees, who'd been participants in the Learn English Holiday (LEH) program, were invited to share their experiences from before they left their homelands to their experiences with LEH and their host families. The host families then shared their perspectives of being hosts and their continuing relationships with the refugees.



From left: LEH coordinator and event organiser Lesley Willcoxson, Tenzin from Tibet, Homestay Host Robin Dobson, George from Syria, Kamero from Burundi and Homestay Host Kristi and daughter Amelia

Attendees at the event reported that they were taken on a very emotional journey, feeling sadness when hearing about the refugees' personal journeys from leaving their families, friends, lifestyles and homelands through refugee/detention camps and ultimately freedom in Australia. Both refugees and hosts recounted their very positive and happy experiences through being involved in the LEH program and living for a week with a host family. The word 'family' was often used when referring to the hosts-refugees' relationship.

The attendees acknowledged and thanked Kayla Szumer who started the LEH program. All Buddies members in attendance, especially those involved in conducting the LEH program, were extremely proud of what the program has achieved.

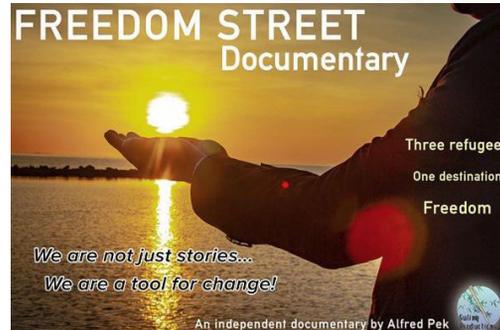
“ Both refugees and hosts recounted their very positive and happy experiences through being involved in the LEH program and living for a week with a host family. ”

Two other events Buddies were involved with

1. Sam McGill coordinated Buddies members' involvement in a Sunshine Coast Refugee Action Network (SCRAN) initiative for Refugee Week. This event received broad media coverage which helped get the message Sunshine Coast Welcomes Refugees out to the community.



2. Lynda Utting coordinated Buddies involvement in the screening of *The Freedom Street Documentary* – a very successful educational event which also raised \$180 for Buddies.



Community engagement

Buddies attended, supported and in some cases participated in events organised by other like-minded organisations on the Sunshine Coast throughout 2022.

Buddies continues its involvement with the Sunshine Coast Multicultural Network and works collaboratively with the Nambour Community Centre, especially with regards to supporting refugees and asylum seekers on the Sunshine Coast.

WHAT WE DO

Fundraising and hospitality

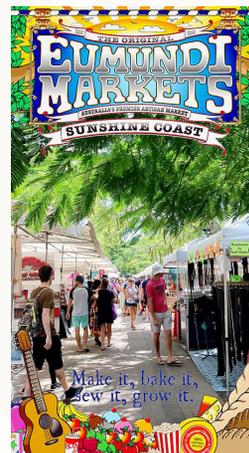


Fundraising

Eumundi car parking

Buddies has maintained our agreement with Eumundi Markets to manage their carpark on the first Wednesday, first Saturday and fifth Saturday of every month and any other days that can't be filled by other groups. We received the very impressive amount of \$10,692 in the last financial year.

Firstly, thanks go to Kendall Snowden and Yokki Rother for setting Buddies up in this program, and continuing thanks to Penny Rivlin and Dee Williams for becoming our rostering team, organising our volunteers who serve in all weather conditions – sometimes during very busy holiday times, staffing the gate and directing traffic! And of course, thanks to the small army of dedicated volunteers who repeatedly carry out this role.



Containers for Change

Buddies has established itself as a recipient in the State Government's container deposit scheme. When eligible containers are deposited using the Buddies' program number 'C10181760', 10¢ for each item is credited directly to Buddies' bank account. \$1,015 was raised from this initiative in 2021/22.



Fruit sales

As has been the case for the last few years, between April and August in both 2021 and 2022 a small but energetic group has harvested avocados and custard apples from Scott Grimmett's property in Buderim.



Special thanks to Kendall Snowden, Thene Bell and Yokki Rother for their indomitable spirit, as well as the collection of other volunteers who donated their time (blood, sweat and sore bodies). Through the generosity of Scott and the hard work of volunteers, Buddies received \$1510 in 2021/2022.

Goodwill Wine

Buddies has continued our agreement with Goodwill Wine whereby Buddies receives \$2 from every bottle purchased by our supporters through their website. This raised \$264 in the past financial year.

<https://goodwillwine.com.au/charities/buddies-refugee-support-group>



Donations

Buddies continues to benefit from regular cash donations from many supporters. There are two ways we receive donations

1. Regular direct credit transfers and
2. *Ad hoc* donations at events and meetings. We ask attendees at events we organise to make a donation in lieu of an entry charge.

Donations of groceries and household items are also collected and passed on to Romero and the Indooroopilly Uniting Refugee Hub for distribution to refugees and asylum seekers in need.

Through the generosity of members and supporters, this financial year Buddies received an amazing \$11,485 in donations – the majority of which has been passed on to those in need on the Sunshine Coast and in Brisbane.

“ Through the generosity of members and supporters, this financial year Buddies received an amazing \$11,485 in donations. ”

SPECIAL MENTION: Matthew Flinders Anglican College

On 21 November 2021 Buddies received a donation of \$984 from the College. All of these funds were split between Romero, Communify and Indooroopilly Refugee Hub. In addition, on 8 June 2022 the College donated \$1743, to be used to defray costs of running the next Learn English Holiday program in September 2022. The money was raised by Year 9 students (approx. 40) who conducted two 'Market Days' as part of their Business Education unit.



Year 6 students (approx. 100) came together on the 8 June 2022 as part of their Values and Religious education focus on refugee and asylum seeker issues. Lesley Wilcoxson organised for two refugees to tell their stories to the students, followed by a Q&A session. The students were riveted and totally engaged throughout the session. The speakers were treated like rock stars after the session, with students flocking the two young men and getting more questions answered and their photos taken with them.

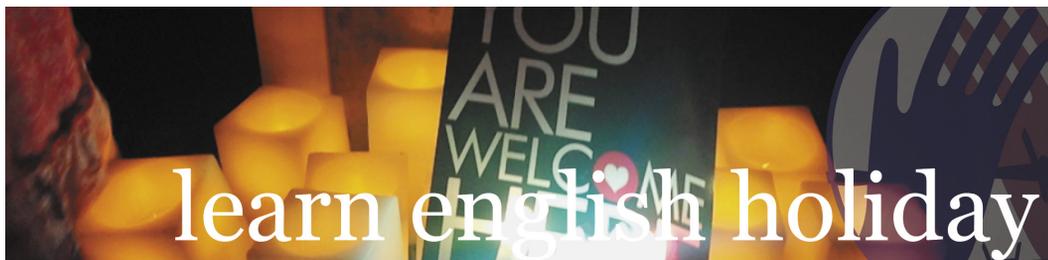
Lesley has been involved in this program previously and will be following up with the students through the rest of this refugee awareness program. The students and staff at Mathew Flinders are impressive ambassadors for their school!

Hospitality

Learn English Holiday program

The Learn English Holiday (LEH) program usually runs each April and September, providing refugees based in Brisbane with the chance to spend a week with volunteer homestay hosts on the Sunshine Coast. During the week they take part in activities designed to help them understand and settle better into Australia – exploring issues such as Australian culture, Indigenous music, storytelling and painting, beach safety, language, letter writing and form filling – while at the same time enjoying the friendship and generosity of their homestay hosts.

Although we were able to run the LEH program at Immanuel Lutheran College in April 2021, with refugees referred to us by the Romero Centre, the September 2021 and April 2022 programs had to be cancelled due to the exigencies of Covid-19. We are, however, planning for and hopeful that the September 2022 LEH will be able to go ahead at Matthew Flinders Anglican College. We look forward to welcoming our participants, expected to be from Tibet, Somalia, Afghanistan, the Congo and Ukraine.



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Service providers we support



Throughout 2021/2022 Buddies provided \$6992 in support for individual refugees and asylum seekers on the Sunshine Coast. We also work indirectly through other organisations that identify and provide for those most in need.

Romero Centre

Since 2017, Buddies has been working with the Romero Centre in Brisbane. The Centre provides and connects asylum seekers living in Brisbane with practical support – like food and shelter, legal connections, English classes, medical care, trauma counselling, community events and more.

In 2021/2022, Buddies donated a total of \$3880 to the Centre, and continues to collect non-perishable food and toiletries for refugees and asylum seekers. We have a number of ‘drop-off’ points, with the parcels usually directed to one location for delivery to Brisbane. Thank you to the small number of volunteers who perform this delivery task.



Communityfy

Communityfy Queensland is a community organisation located in Bardon, Brisbane, which provides a diverse range of services to a varied range of people, including people seeking asylum and refugees. In 2021/2022, Buddies donated a total of \$3330 to Communityfy towards food, accommodation and education for a number of Communityfy clients.



Indooroopilly Uniting Church Refugee Support Service (Refugee Hub)

In 2021/2022, Buddies continued to provide financial and in-kind support to this group in Brisbane who provide practical support to needy asylum seekers and refugees



Their current focus is helping asylum seekers and refugees to complete complex immigration paperwork by providing access to volunteers and *pro bono* lawyers. The Service also provides some supplementary food and encourages people to participate in weekday activities of the church, as a way to integrate into the community.

Throughout the year, Buddies has maintained their professional and personal relationship with this group, and donated \$6506 to their causes.

Other service providers we support

Buddies supported other service providers during 2021/2022 with donations totalling \$4550. Those organisations included Mahboba's Promise, the Refugee Council of Australia Afghan appeal, Brisbane On Arrival Support Group, World Wellness Group, the Biloela Family and Refugee Association of Logan.

Over the last couple of years, as refugees were released from the Alternative Place of Detention (APOD) at Kangaroo Point in Brisbane, Buddies have made several donations to our partner organisations in Brisbane to specifically support these refugees.



Protesters demonstrate outside the Kangaroo Point Hotel in July 2021

**Membership,
finance,
statement
of accounts**



Membership

In the 2021/2022 financial year, Buddies membership fee remained unchanged at \$10 per year. The membership year is 1 July to 30 June. As of June 2022, Buddies had 86 members, an increase from 76 the previous year. The last three years' membership numbers include those who donate on a regular monthly basis – they become automatic members.

During the 2022-2023 financial year, the Board will be looking at revamping the way in which 'membership' is defined and structured, and the current terminology used will be simplified. Appropriate modifications will also be made to the Buddies Constitution as required to reflect any changes.

Finance

Our Finance Committee consists of Clare Arico (Treasurer), Penny Rivlin, Dee Williams and Tricia Reade. We are extremely fortunate to have a passionate and knowledgeable team guiding Buddies' financial future.

Statement of accounts

Financial year to June 2022

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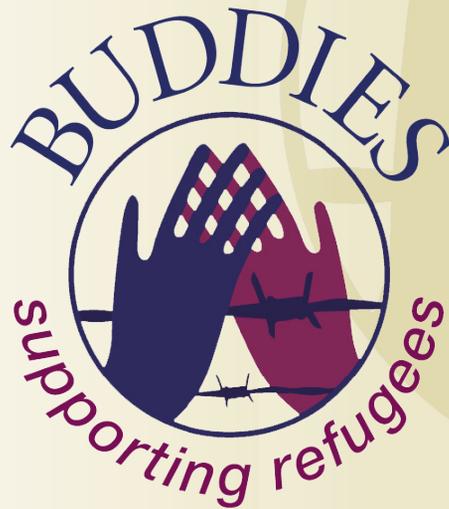
INCOME		
Membership fees	\$ 170.00	1%
Donations	\$ 17,228.08	54%
Fundraising	\$ 14,390.90	45%
Other	\$ 0	0%
TOTAL INCOME	\$ 31,788.98	100%
EXPENDITURE		
Operating costs	\$ 2,237.42	8%
Community awareness	\$ 766.20	3%
Fundraising Costs	\$ 0	0%
Direct support for people seeking asylum & refugees	\$ 7,527.80	26%
Donations to refugee support & advocacy groups	\$ 18,226	63%
TOTAL EXPENDITURE	\$ 28,797.42	100%
Cash at bank as at 1 July 2021	\$ 5,802.97	
Plus income	\$ 31,788.98	
Subtotal	<u>\$ 37,591.95</u>	
Less expenditure	\$ 28,797.42	
Balance at bank 30 June 2022	\$ 8,794.53	
Less June accruals	\$ 2,978.00	
Less grant money	\$ 3,344.00	
Funds available for disbursement	\$ 2,472.53	

Our SUPPORTERS and PARTNERS



Buddies is grateful for the support of the following groups:

- Amnesty International (Maroochydore)
- Asylum Seeker Resource Centre
- Communify
- Eumundi Markets
- Fisheries on the Spit
- Goodwill Wines
- Immanuel Lutheran College, Buderim
- Majestic Cinema, Nambour
- Matthew Flinders Anglican College, Buderim
- Multicultural Australia (MA)
- Nambour Community Centre
- Noosa Council
- Noosa Welcomes Refugees
- Romero Centre – Mercy Community
- St John’s College, Nambour
- Sunshine Coast Multicultural Network
- Sunshine Coast Refugee Action Network (SCRAN)
- Sunshine Coast Regional Council
- University of the Sunshine Coast
- Welcome to Maleny
- Wildlife HQ



BUDDIES REFUGEE SUPPORT GROUP

AUGUST 2022

This report compiled by Len Mangan

Produced by Wendy Oakley