

Minutes - General Members Meeting - Buddies Refugee Support Group Sunshine Coast

Date: 6th March 2022

Venue: Connections on King, 2 – 10 Gloucester St Buderim 4556

Chairperson: Len Mangan

Minutes: taken by Gaynore Stoessel

Attendance: 38 people

Apologies: Lesley Willcoxson, Tricia Reade, Thorsten Kels, Lua Bruckhoff, Anneliese Broadway, Kayla Szumer, Maree Keating, Ali Every, Lidia McNamara, Bronwyn Jackson, Angela & Bruce Anderson, Zanette Perinoni, Joyce Tozer

Meeting began: 11.40 am

-
- Len welcomed all to meeting
 - First People's Acknowledgement (Kabi Kabi people and Jinibara people) (Reflect on the statements – “We belong to the land” v. “We own the land”. What one word comes to mind? ... Respect, We're all foreigners, Invasion, Dispossession, Sharing ...)
1. **Values** – Buddies to All. We will use this item during future meetings to reflect on our past, and guide our future.
 2. **Previous Meeting Minutes** – outstanding action items – (none)
 3. **Resignations:** Narelle Matheson (Refugee Engagement Co-ordinator), Robin Jones (Director), Sue Berry (Director), Anneliese Broadway (FB Co-ordinator)

Appointments: Lua Bruckhoff (Director), Sam McGill (Director and FB Co-ordinator) Paul McKinlay (Co-ordinator Buddies history/book)

4. **Volunteer Acknowledgement:**

Len acknowledged Lynda for the extra work she has been doing.

Also acknowledged Penny and the parking team at Eumundi Markets (12 people) who bring in around \$1,000 a month to Buddies.

However, volunteer award goes to Narelle Matheson for counselling and helping refugees here on the Coast, as well as a lady in Brisbane, and giving much needed advice and guidance to us Buddies members too.

Although Narelle will be leaving us, happily, she will remain in contact.

5. **Buddies Calendar 2022:** What events are planned? What sort of activities are in the pipeline?

- Unfortunately, April LEH (Learn English Holiday) had to be cancelled, but planning for Sept LEH to go ahead.
- Harmony Week Event - 20th March, Refugee Week Event in June.
- Eumundi Markets. 12 Buddies parking volunteers. 1st Saturday, 1st Wednesday, and 5th Saturday of every month plus any extra shifts that become available.
- Board Meeting monthly (all welcome), General Members Meeting bi-monthly.
- Addresses to Community Groups, Schools Program (One already happening at Matthew Flinders College in 3rd term)

6. **Harmony Week:** Sunday 20th March 2022, 2pm, at Connections on King, 2 – 10 Gloucester St, Buderim 4556.

Featuring a one act stage play called 'Ali', about a refugee, directed by Lua Bruckhoff. Discussion and refreshments will follow the play.

7. Reports:

Refugee update: One refugee we were supporting has shifted to Townsville chasing better job opportunities. He has some job applications in at the moment, and is keeping in touch. We await updates.

We continue our support of an asylum seeker with no visa status, living here on the Sunshine Coast.

Buddies Bulletin: Now produced monthly (sent out via email)

Constitution review: Underway, but dependent on finding a Co-ordinator.

Mail Pick Up: (in Buderim) Will require someone living close to the Buderim Post Office to collect Buddies mail, usually just bank statements, which need to be sent via hard copy. Please see Len.

RAR Election Kit: (Rural Australians for Refugees) non-party political, has information about policies and voting that could benefit asylum seekers and refugees. Information on this has appeared in the Buddies Bulletin.

SCRAN (Sunshine Coast Refugee Action Network) is the RAR group here on the Sunshine Coast. They are writing an election kit specifically for our area, and having a stall at the local Farmers' Market at Kawana. See RAR website for more details.

Grants:

A \$300 grant was received for Harmony Day.

A \$3,344 grant was received for LEH. Lesley will report on the grant requirements/restrictions at the next board meeting.

Insurance: Public liability insurance – checking underway to find best deal.

8. General Business:

- Last year funds able to be raised via Avocado crops (Scott Grimmett's farm) were severely affected by much of the crop being stolen. Seeking ways to remedy this.
- Paul asked for people interested in helping to write the Buddies history book to come forward – those with various writing, editing, proofing skills, personal knowledge of events etc.
- Glyni suggested Buddies write a letter of support to people of Ukraine.

9. Financial report: Clare gave overview of Buddies finances.

Basically, this month, Buddies received - \$650 from regular donations, \$1000 from Eumundi parking, and \$85 from recycling.

Our regular monthly donations were given to Refugee Hub Indooroopilly, Romero, and Communify – total \$1,000.

Also, a donation of \$500 was given to World Wellness Group.

Setting aside the \$3,344 grant for LEH, Buddies still has \$1,200 to spend on worthy causes. Suggestions for where this money will be spent are:-

- Multicultural Australia program on the Sunshine Coast helping unaccompanied children on humanitarian visas.

- A local family who has hosted a refugee family for several years, without any financial assistance. Two of the refugee children are very gifted athletically – selected for the Nationals in their field.
- An Afghani widow and her 5 children living in Afghanistan – particularly need financial aid to survive the harsh winter.

10. Good News & Meeting Review:

- Len – heard news report 17-02-22, that there have been promising discussions between Australia and New Zealand that 150 refugees who have been languishing in Australian detention for 8-9 years could be resettled in New Zealand. (Comment was that the best news would have been if they had been resettled years ago.)
- Michael – report in Fairfax papers that young refugees, highlighted during Djokovic’s stay in detention, to go to the USA.
- Pearl – 20 years ago was involved with Buddies visiting schools and speaking at Rotary. Noted there are lots of ways to inform the younger generation about refugees and asylum seekers.
- Glyni – said the U3A would welcome a speaker from Buddies.
- Narelle – there has been a lot of talk about Afghanistan and Ukraine, but we need to remember there are still many people living in poverty (under Australia’s watch) in PNG and Nauru.

.....Break for refreshments.....

11. Nadia Murad video and discussion:

- Robin Jones introduced the video (22 minutes in length) and led the discussion afterwards. (Robin, who has several Ezidi friends, explained she liked to use the spelling 'Ezidi' instead of popular 'Yazidi' – 'Ezidi' is what Nadia's people, an ethnic group from Northern Iraq, call themselves.)
- In 2018, Ezidi woman, Nadia Murad was joint winner of the Nobel Peace Prize, together with Denis Mukwege "for their efforts to end the use of sexual violence as a weapon of war and armed conflict." This video is Nadia's powerful acceptance speech, in Arabic with English subtitles.
- Nadia has also written a book, "The Last Girl: My story of captivity and my fight against the Islamic State." (Three copies of the Nadia's book were available for sale.)
- Islamic State's attempted genocide of the Ezidi in 2014 was the 74th time an outside power had tried to wipe out this people.
- Robin said Australia has received 3,000 Ezidi refugees, and actually it could be up to 4,000 by now, since Covid travel restrictions have lifted.
- There are 800 Ezidi in Queensland – in Toowoomba. Other Ezidi are settled throughout Australia in Armidale, Coffs Harbour and Wagga.
- Noted that all who come as refugees create jobs. (More children at school, more people need dentists, services, shops etc.)
- Robin worked with the Ezidi community in Armidale. Said Armidale opened their arms to the Ezidi. They now have land to grow their own vegetables and are able to sell them at markets. They also have their own grocery store.
- Nadia, who now lives in Germany, grew up wanting to be a hairdresser. Now she is a voice for the United Nations.

12. **Next General Members Meeting:** 24th April 2022. (11 am at St Marks Anglican Church Hall Buderim. This time and venue to be confirmed)

Meeting ended: 1.45pm

Job Showcase – chaired by Lynda (20 minutes) – matching volunteers with jobs.

- Buddies has a vision and needs helpers on the ground to bring it about.
- All about “many hands make light work”.
- The attendees’ enthusiastic response to this presentation indicates we will fill many of the jobs advertised, which is a good sign we will achieve our vision for 2022.