

Minutes of Buddies meeting, Sunday 22 May

Chairperson: Fergus FitzGerald, minute taker: Audrey Raymond

Apologies: Margaret Landbeck, Margaret Norman, Garry Bates, Carmel Dobson, Lisa McDonald, Falu and Michel Eyre, Kendall Snowden and Yokki Rother, Shona Kendrick

Fergus opened the meeting by welcoming all newcomers. He then recommended that everyone sign in to receive the Bulletin. There was a call for silence to consider why we were at the meeting and to remember and think about all those we are trying to help, particularly those on Nauru and Manus following two tragic deaths and another self immolation in recent weeks.

Guest speakers

The Bangladeshi asylum seekers from Kilcoy Meatworks. We had short but moving presentations from each of the Bangladeshi men about their lives and circumstances, which was preceded by a touching talk given by their 'Mum/Aunty', Veronica ("Ronnie") Webster. Fergus appealed to all present to write to Ministers about these men's situation.

Reports

Hospitality

Fergus, in Kayla's absence, spoke about the next Learn English Holiday program (10-15/7), which Buddies is running themselves now. He talked about the highlight of the course which is always the multicultural dinner and then read a letter in praise of LEH.

Lobby group

Audrey urged everyone to write letters, however short, to the Prime Minister, Peter Dutton, ministers and politicians on any subject they felt strongly about. She stressed the importance of doing this now during this pre election period. She confirmed, in answer to a question, that letters are probably more effective than emails.

Helen Thomas told the meeting about FULCROM a Melbourne based organisation which is targeting marginal seats, which are very important in this pre election period.

Finance group

Fergus especially drew attention to the wonderful contribution made by Kendall and Yokki with all their hard work and fund raising. He next listed and explained various donations made by Buddies. He went on to express appreciation for the generous support given by Chilemwa in doing some pro bono work for the asylum seekers who she is helping with legal support and advice. There was then a short consideration given to whether Buddies should give loans to asylum seekers in need of them but the general consensus was that we should not go down that route but stick to gifts of money, where needed.

Management group

Fergus spoke of the need for a management team to convene meetings in between Buddies meetings because of the growing need for quick decisions to be made on a growing number of issues as they arose. This would also free up time at regular Buddies meetings. There was general agreement to that suggestion and Fergus asked that anybody interested in being on the team should contact him.

Forthcoming Events

Jenny Hughes spoke on behalf of Kayla about the forthcoming fundraising concert on 28th May and called for contributions of cakes and sandwiches for afternoon tea.

Fergus reminded everyone of various forthcoming events – the Nambour Multicultural Dinner on 3 June, the film Chasing Asylum showing on 8 June, MDA's Luminous Lantern Parade in Brisbane on 10 June, Women OutFront showing Mary Meets Mohammad in Maleny on 18 June and Refugee Conversations at Maleny Neighbourhood Centre 20 June at 2pm

Refugee Week

Our plans to participate with the Sunshine Coast Council to combine in doing something together with its announcement of a Refugee Welcome Zone did not come to fruition, so we have bowed out.

Audrey spoke about her views with regard to Buddies putting on a showing of Chasing Asylum at the Nambour Cinema. She felt strongly that we should do that at this important political time. However, an alternative more "feel good" movie, Freedom Stories, was put forward for consideration as being more appropriate for Refugee Week and in keeping with this year's theme "with courage let us all combine". There was a discussion and a vote taken and Freedom Stories won the day with 16 votes to 12.

Other business

Fergus spoke of the importance of members attending the Inaugural General Meeting of Buddies Ltd to nominate and

vote for candidates for the governance group. All members were asked to consider standing for the executive committee and thereby playing their part in the running of Buddies. A quorum of 20 is needed at this meeting, which will be at 10.30am before the next Buddies meeting on 26th June.

There was a discussion about Buddies remaining non-political but Jenny Hughes pointed out that Buddies cannot avoid being political because of what we do, but we are not party political. Patrick Buick stressed that first and foremost we must be humanitarian.

Al Spierings drew attention to the importance of people realising what is entailed in voting for the Senate i.e. the difference between putting one's votes above or below the line. This will be discussed at the next Buddies meeting for clarification.

Audrey mentioned briefly the cost of showing a movie at Nambour was quoted as being \$1000.

The meeting closed at 12.40pm.

Next meeting (26/6)

Chair: Bronwyn Bell

Minutes: Diana Woolley

Guest speaker: David Knobel, a Young Buddies member and former Greens candidate, who will speak about "A Better Way" for managing the asylum seeker crisis in our region.