



## Living in Australia Program, September 2023

The September 2023 Living in Australia Program involved 35 participants from, variously, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Syria, Guatemala, Afghanistan, Myanmar and Ukraine. A distinctive feature of this program was the presence of 21 people aged between 12 to 31, including an energetic, soccer-loving all-male group of 6 teenagers. Contrasting with the large youth presence was the involvement of 7 people over the age of 60, including a livewire couple aged 70 and 77! Almost all participants had been in Australia for only 2-3 months and, while some spoke good English, we also had a group of older participants who spoke almost no English.



The Living in Australia Program could never run without the generosity and support of our homestay hosts – 23 this time – who invited our guests into their homes, laughed, shared stories and their lives with them, even when effective communication required more gestures than spoken words. Similarly, our classroom volunteers are critical to our capacity to run the LAP. This time 37 classroom volunteers worked with small groups or (for those with almost no English) one to one, helping them to work through the learning activities. We were fortunate to have also the assistance of a dozen year 9 students from Matthew Flinders Anglican College who not only kept our refugee guests safe at the beach but also ensured they had a lot of fun.

**One of the striking things about this group of LAP participants was their energy and the friendships they made. Comments from participants included:**

- ▯ **I learnt to like all the people from other countrys.**
- ▯ **I enjoyed learning new things and making friends.**
- ▯ **Everything is beautiful. The party was very good.**
- ▯ **Thank you so much for everything. You are all amazing people.**
- ▯ **Great program, very helpful, and informative lessons! Thank you so much.**
- ▯ **Thank you for everyone, from the children to all the rest.**

**Apart from the visible involvement of volunteers and homestay hosts, many thanks are also due to our friends and supporters who make the program financially feasible. We particularly want to thank our partner schools – Matthew Flinders College who shared their wonderful facilities with us this September, Immanuel College, St John’s College – as well as Wildlife HQ and Fisheries on the Spit, whose generous discounts make possible our visit to the zoo and fish and chips on the beach.**

**This year we have also greatly benefited from a \$4000 grant from Community Underwriting, who provides Buddies’ public liability insurance. This has meant that our LAP costs have more or less been covered and the funds obtained through the tireless work of our fundraisers have been able for this year to be directed in part to our involvement in the Community Refugee Integration and Settlement Program (CRISP). Thank you, Community Underwriting!**

**– Lesley Willcoxson**









