

## Buddies Meeting, 27 November 2016

Chairperson: Zanette Perinoni, Note taker: Fergus FitzGerald, Apologies: Janene McCarthy, Kayla Szumer, Dee Williams

Finance: - Fergus

- Fundraising from stall at Festuri festival, Nambour \$165, 12 volunteers at short notice were thanked, no other community groups could make it
- Amendment to last month's report on Walk Together costs, successfully negotiated for refund of \$122 for electricity connection from Council, total net cost of the event is \$528
- Clarify for meeting that all proposed expenses were approved by the Finance Group before being committed to, in accordance with the finance guidelines and procedures
- Current available funds are: \$4,051 – full report attached to Bulletin.
- Current funding programs through MDA have now both been completed. \$6000 accumulated from \$300/month for asylum seeker training has been re-directed to Salvos Legal Asylum Seeker Clinic to assist clients with protection visa application process and legal costs. \$500/month for asylum seeker and refugee transport assistance won't be as important in 2017 with commencement of subsidised travel by Qld government.
- Following discussion, it was agreed to defer making a decision on future funding support through MDA until after the January meeting. Suggestions for what, if any funding or other ideas to be emailed to Fergus: fergfitzgerald7@gmail.com.

### Immigration Support: Terry Boyce

- Provided information on the status of asylum seekers being supported through their claims for protection process – with their permission to enable the meeting to respond to their difficult situations.
- Ranjan's application for a safe haven enterprise visa (SHEV) has been rejected, it is undergoing automatic review, chances of success are low, options of Federal Court case or ministerial intervention also unlikely. Potential media campaign if all else fails to save him from deportation and likely harm.
- Abdul's application for SHEV refused. The pathway of review and appeal is the same as for Ranjan. Abdul is prepared to go anywhere, even Nauru to accept Cambodia resettlement (although not possible) to avoid deportation to Sri Lanka and the certain harm or death, he fears.
- Ahmad, 17yo Afghan very successful Y12 student in Brisbane has been invited to apply for a TPV or SHEV. Valuable time has been lost in not preparing his application through MDA, despite a maximum extension granted. Buddies will now support him with Chilemwa as legal representative.
- Special fundraising to support all 3 suggested, similar to the successful "Save Nadir" campaign.
- Harish Shatty, Indian in Toowoomba is able to pay for his legal cost with Chilemwa.
- Mahram and Abas, both young Hazara men, referred by Toowoomba Refugee and Migrant Support, were introduced to the meeting. Both have had all avenues of appeal rejected, apart from ministerial intervention – considered very unlikely to succeed. Both have worked at Toowoomba meat-works until bridging visas cancelled. They receive no support from Centrelink, Medicare etc for last 12 months and now face imminent deportation to Afghanistan and probable death. The situation is similar to a number of the 'Bangladeshi boys' in Kilcoy. Any public support campaign is likely to gain more traction if done for individuals and their personal story.
- Mitra Khakbaz (MDA) offered connections to support groups (World Wellness) and community liaison with the Immigration Dept, as well as other options such as the church sanctuary movement, or 'loves finds a way', and suggested any response to the above and other cases needs to be considered strategically and sustainably for Buddies.

### Other business

#### **ABC Christmas appeal: Kendall Snowden**

Noted the annual appeal is directed towards gifts for refugees and their families.

#### **Residency test: Kendall**

- Explained case of young Indian student, who's obtained bachelor of nursing in Australia and applied for permanent

residency has failed her English test 4 times, even though her written and spoken English is very good, because of language challenges with interviewers, e.g. very thick Scottish accent

- This is a common complaint not only for refugees, but also migrants, even from English speaking countries
- Mitra advised that Community Alliance Qld is aware of this issue and is undertaking advocacy with the authorities to have the situation investigated.

#### ***Crowd-funding: Zanette***

- A proposal by Kayla to consider crowd funding as a way to provide financial support to several LEH asylum seeker students pay for their high cost tertiary (international student rates).
- Explained that the process is not straight forward and requires considerable information before initiating. It is something the Fundraising Group will pursue.

#### ***Volunteering: Audrey Raymond***

- It is often very difficult to get volunteers to step-up and lead or support important Buddies activities, even as simple as chairing monthly meetings. This is not conducive to good outcomes and is disappointing with so many members.
- Zanette noted that the proposed fundraising raffle of a week in luxury accommodation in Thailand was not supported and the generous offer had to be declined.
- 3 members of Lobby Group are retiring, fresh ideas and a new approach is required.
- Concern that information about volunteering opportunities is not readily available. Suggested that people should be pro-active and seek out opportunities and step forward to volunteer or lead activities.

#### ***Calendar of events: Carmel Dobson***

- Proposal to develop a calendar of events for 12 months ahead to enable good forward planning for Buddies activities, avoid clashes with other important events, and provide opportunities for people to identify and lead or support specific proposed activities of interest. The calendar could include key relevant dates from other organizations, e.g. RCOA, BRASS, local council etc.
- Subsequent to meeting suggested the calendar be hosted on Buddies website to be accessible to everyone at any time. Carmel and Bronwyn Bell will follow-up with Wendy Oakley.

#### ***Forum: Buddies review and future opportunities***

- Terry led the forum on “what Buddies means to me and what do we do well and what we could do better”. Separate notes on the outcome of the group discussions will be presented at the January meeting.
- Notes from the 6 discussion groups to be sent to Zanette for collation.
- Suggested similar forums be held regularly (e.g. 6-monthly)

#### **Next meeting**

Sunday 22 January 2017, Chairperson: Margaret Landbeck, Note-taker: Audrey Raymond