

Learn English Holiday program

September 18-23, 2022

After an 18-month hiatus caused by Covid uncertainty, the Learn English Holiday program resumed in September 2022 at Matthew Flinders Anglican College, Buderim. It was a wonderful program in many ways: our homestay hosts and classroom volunteers have missed the opportunity to share their lives with and learn from the experiences of our refugee guests due to COVID-19, so this LEH program was extra special!

On this occasion we had 26 participants in the program - from Ukraine (11) Iran (3), Afghanistan (5), Tibet (2), Iraq (4) and Syria (1). Along with the 17 adults and a teenager we also hosted 8 children under the age of 8, most of whom were here as part of a single-parent, female-led family. We therefore not only ran a program for adults but also ran a separate full program for the children so that their parents could have the freedom to spend time with other adults.

Our homestay hosts report establishing warm and likely ongoing connections with their guests. Classroom volunteers – this time assigned to specific families and specific activity groups – also reported a great sense of connection. We worked together on some important sharing activities – focused on culture, accounts of refugee journeys, the Multicultural Dinner – we did some serious learning – water safety, English language, letter writing, scams – and we had fun – a visit to Wildlife HQ, fish and chips on the beach, the hokey pokey ... and perhaps best of all, so many good things made possible by our homestay hosts.

Many thanks to all in the Coast community who continue to support and demonstrate our caring for refugees in Australia. Without homestay hosts, classroom volunteers and the organising team what we do could not occur. Special gratitude goes to the schools who provide us with their facilities and resources – Matthew Flinders Anglican College, Immanuel Lutheran College, St John's Nambour – and to the school leaders who generously give their time to our program, who encourage their students to be involved, who look after us and ensure we have what we need. Thanks too, to Wildlife HQ and Fisheries on the Spit whose price reductions make it feasible for our guests to visit the zoo animals and enjoy fish and chips on the beach and to Lynsey Pollak who shared with us all his fantastic, participatory music-making. We also deeply value our links with Multicultural Australia and the Romero Centre, which underpin our program.

The program will run again from 9-14 April 2023, but under a new name – the Living in Australia program (LAP) – which we think better expresses the focus of our activities.

– Lesley Willcoxson

