

Living in Australia Program (LAP)

April 2025

The April LAP, held at Immanuel Lutheran College, Buderim, involved 28 participants from seven different countries - Afghanistan, DR Congo, Colombia, Iran, Palestine, Syria, and Venezuela - 10 homestay hosts and their families, 37 adult classroom volunteers, 12 student classroom volunteers, and 15 water safety volunteers. In the classroom we were also privileged to have professional input from Chris Williams, whose didgeridoo playing always delights everyone; Gun Meskanen, who taught our grateful group to use tapping to de-stress; Suzanne Volejnikova-Wenger who provided a great overview of the health system and how to access it; and Sean Murray, from Mooloolaba TAFE who helped people understand the range of educational pathways open to them and relevant to their interests.

Various other people also contributed in so many different ways: Gayla Mathews, the Immanuel school chaplain, who smoothed the path for our use of the Environmental Centre such that the facilities were perfect for our needs; the IT people who made sure the system worked for us; Matt Bradforde, the Immanuel sports teacher who gathered together a water safety team for us; the Immanuel church team, and Kendall Snowden, who provided delicious morning teas; and also the Immanuel admin people who did such a good job of printing our participant booklets. Added to this are our other collaborators – St Johns, Nambour, who so kindly lend us the bus; and Wildlife HQ, Fisheries on the Spit, and Surf Safety Australia, whose generously reduced prices and donations make our beach and zoo day both lots of fun and safe for our refugee group.

It really does take a village to bring up a child and to welcome a refugee! It is wonderful to see an ever-growing number of Sunshine Coast residents involved in the Living in Australia Program and to hear from our refugee participants how much they learning and how important the LAP is to their settlement and feeling of acceptance in Australia.