



Buddies Refugee
Support Group

ANNUAL REPORT 2020–21



ACKNOWLEDGMENT

We acknowledge Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders as the first people of Australia. We acknowledge the language and cultural diversity and traditions that existed in this land for tens of thousands of years before the arrival of the first settlers' fleet. We acknowledge Kabi Kabi and Jinibara Peoples of the hinterland and coast of the Sunshine Coast where Buddies members walk today.

In this spirit of recognition, reconciliation and respect Buddies members work to create a community fostering belonging, welcome and inclusion.



Introduction

Buddies Refugee Support Group Ltd is registered in Queensland as a non-listed public company limited by guarantee. At the AGM of 6 September 2020, Len Mangan, Paul McKinlay, Lynda Utting and Gaynore Stoessel were elected to serve as directors, and Andrea Douglas stepped down from her role as Acting Director. James Fowler accepted the role of Bookkeeper, and Andrea Douglas was re-appointed by the Directors as Company Secretary.

The members of Buddies thank the Directors, Treasurer, Secretary, fundraisers, advocates, educators and all others who contribute to the aims of the group for their tremendous work, skills, passion and knowledge.

In February 2021, James Fowler officially announced his resignation (as of 31 January 2021) as Treasurer, but remained in the role until a replacement could be found. Little did he know that his skills and willingness to dedicate time to the role would be so difficult to replace.



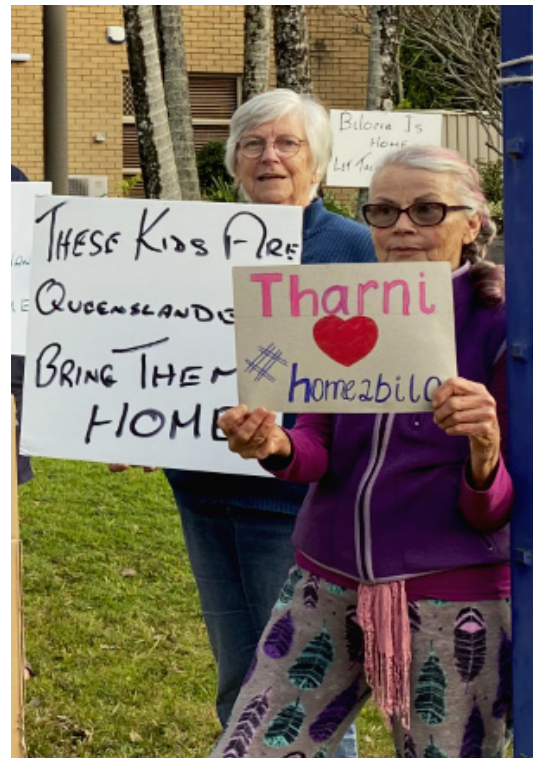
Buddies directors 2020-21: (from left) Len Mangan, Paul McKinlay, Gaynore Stoessel and Lynda Utting

In late April 2021, Buddies gladly appointed Clare Arico as Treasurer. Buddies thanks Clare for stepping into this role and bringing with her a depth of knowledge and skill that will continue to see Buddies remain financially viable. Buddies thanks James for his steady hand and clear explanation of our financial position in what can sometimes be confusing situations.

In 2020, Andrea Fowler also stepped down as Secretary, and Gaynore Stoessel assumed the role – thank you Gaynore. Thank you Andrea for regularly going above and beyond your expected role to ensure all activities ran smoothly.

During 2020/21, despite difficulties from many aspects, Buddies continued to make a difference through fundraising events and activities, Learn English Holiday programs, community engagement and education programs, and providing much-needed financial support to individuals and the organisations that coordinate support to the most vulnerable members of our community – people seeking asylum with no income support.

Our work builds the capacity of the communities we work with and live within to connect with the stories of real people affected by policy decisions. These collective efforts have enabled us to slowly challenge the myth, and change the negative narrative surrounding people seeking asylum.



Community engagement: Vigil for Tharnicaa held at St Marks Church Buderim, June 2021

As we end the 2020/2021 year the Board of Directors are deeply grateful for the many people who continue to strive to assist refugees and seekers of asylum in a myriad of ways. This includes the members of the Finance group – Clare Arico, Dee Williams, Penny Rivlin and Tricia Reade – who work very hard to ensure Buddies’ limited funds are allocated wisely and that we maintain our accountability.

Heartfelt thanks must also go to Wendy Oakley who is the backbone of our media presence, ensuring over 1100 people each fortnight receive Buddies’ and refugee-related news through the Buddies Bulletin, and revamping and maintaining the Buddies website. Thank you also to Anneliese Broadaway for maintaining our FaceBook presence and ensuring all ‘likers’ are kept up to date with refugee and asylum seeker events and government decisions.

We thank our members for their financial, gift and food donations, as well as volunteering to attend and support events, attend meetings, and encouraging others to support and take a stand against those policies that intentionally or unintentionally cause unnecessary pain and suffering to those who already have so very little.

This annual report provides a summary outline of the activities and initiatives that have taken place during the year.

– Buddies’ Directors

“ Our work builds the capacity of the communities we work with and live within to connect with the stories of real people affected by policy decisions. These collective efforts have enabled us to slowly challenge the myth, and change the negative narrative surrounding people seeking asylum ”

Buddies' mission

We advocate for the just and compassionate treatment of refugees and asylum seekers, consistent with the international human rights standards that Australia helped develop and has endorsed.

We support policies towards refugees and asylum seekers that reflect respect, decency and traditional Australian generosity to those in need while advancing Australia's international standing and national interest.

Buddies' values

RESPECT –

for everyone's human rights

COMPASSION –

for those suffering discrimination and persecution

GENEROSITY –

to help those in need

WELCOME –

to those from somewhere else





What we do

Hospitality & refugee support

We get to know refugees and people seeking asylum living in south-east Queensland. We offer practical support to new arrivals. We provide people seeking asylum and refugees with advice and assistance to access professional services including legal, medical and allied health services.



Community awareness, advocacy and education

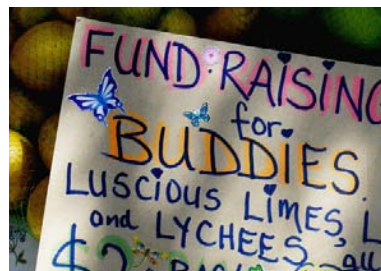
We seek the truth about refugees and asylum issues in Australia and make this public through meetings and forums, talks to schools and community groups, our fortnightly newsletters, website and social media.

We lobby politicians and other decision makers and use publicity to advocate for the just and compassionate treatment of refugees and asylum seekers.



Fundraising

We raise funds and provide direct financial assistance to refugees and people seeking asylum and to the advocacy and support organisations they rely on.



Community awareness, advocacy & education

“When the world is silent, even one voice becomes powerful”

– Malala Yousafzai, Pakistani activist

www.refugeebuddies.org

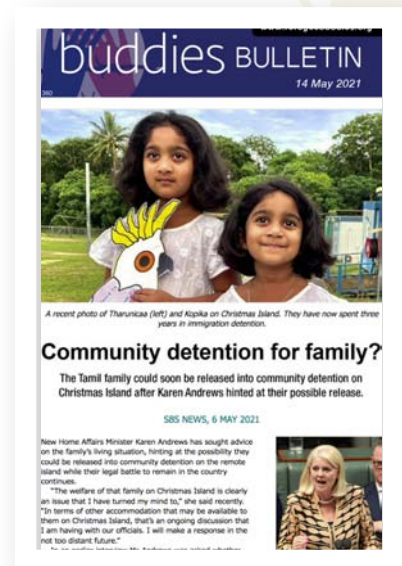
refugee buddies BULLETIN

25 June 2020

The Bulletin

Wendy Oakley continues to publish *The Bulletin* rain, hail or shine, and it continues to be one of Buddies' most important communication tools. Distributed by email, *The Bulletin* provides Buddies with an opportunity to share issues and policies affecting refugees and asylum seekers and promote activities for fundraising, support and advocacy.

 <https://www.refugeebuddies.org/bulletins-current-year>



Web

Wendy Oakley continued to manage and maintain our website over the financial year. Buddies thanks Wendy for her expertise and dedication.

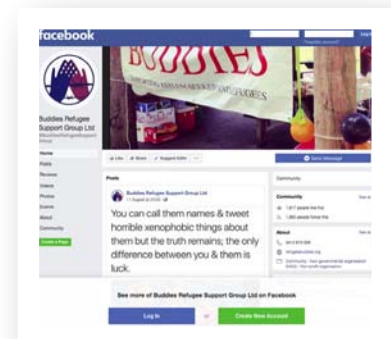
 <https://www.refugeebuddies.org>



Facebook

Anneliese Broadway has continued this year as Administrator of our Facebook page, and we thank Anna for her ongoing involvement in this form of Buddies' communication, despite her very busy life!

 <https://www.facebook.com/BuddiesRefugeeSupportGroup/>



Harmony Day 2021

In March 2021, as part of Harmony Week 2021, Buddies co-ordinated a special event – 'Refugee Stories – You Can't Ask That!'

In collaboration with the Sunshine Coast Multicultural Network (SCMN) and with support from the Sunshine Coast Council and Queensland Government, attendees shared in a viewing of the ABS documentary 'You can't ask that' (theme: refugees), followed by an open Q&A discussion with a panel of four with various views on the 'refugee issue'. Two members of the panel are themselves refugees (Ethiopia and Biafra Republic in Nigeria), while the other two have many years of experience working with refugees in Australia and overseas.

The night was a great success, with the questions asked from the floor serving to advance the knowledge and understanding of all in the room, and the panel sharing many interesting (and at times emotional) observations.

In addition to the educational and community networking benefits, the night also raised \$160 from raffle tickets sales.



Speakers at the Harmony Day event with Buddies Director Len Mangan (*second from right*). (*From left*) Mengistu Hailu, Robin Jones, Polycap Muobike Tochukwu & Mitra Khabraz

Community engagement through film

Molly and Mobarak

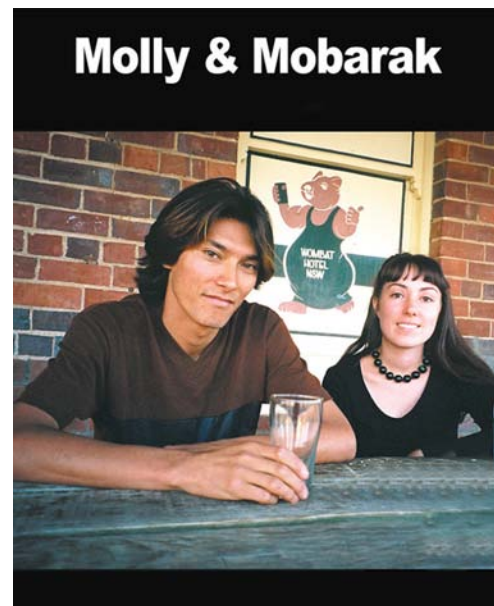
"Mobarak Tahiri, a young Hazara refugee, is living in the town of Young, in rural NSW, on a Temporary Protection Visa. He forms a friendship with local Molly. For Mobarak, this friendship grows into something much deeper. Does Molly share these feelings? And with his Visa time running out, can he stay?."

 <https://www.roninfilms.com.au/feature/737/molly-mobarak.html>

In June 2021, Buddies hosted the documentary film "Molly and Mobarak" as part of the 2021 Refugee Awareness Week. This was followed by a Q&A and general discussion over tea, coffee and snacks.

The film was a success, with over 60 people attending. Comments afterwards from audience members proved the film was considered both thought-provoking and confronting.

As usual, Buddies used the opportunity to run a stall in the foyer for education and advocacy purposes. Although the night was advertised as a free event, the event was also an opportunity to raise funds and over \$100 was raised from the raffle and donations.



Fundraising



Eumundi car parking

Buddies has maintained our agreement with Eumundi Markets to manage their car park on the first Wednesday and the first Saturday of every month. This brought in \$9,878 in the last financial year – even with the ongoing restrictions. This is close to double the amount raised in the 2019/2020 year.

Firstly thanks go to Kendall Snowden and Yokki Rother for setting Buddies up in this program, and continuing thanks to Penny Rivlin and Dee Williams for becoming our rostering team, organising our volunteers who serve in all weather conditions, sometimes during very busy holiday times, staffing the gate and directing traffic! And of course, thanks to the (small) army of dedicated volunteers who fill this role again and again.



Containers for Change

Buddies has established itself as a recipient in the State Government's new container deposit scheme. Use our program number "C10181760" when you deposit eligible containers and 10¢ for each will be credited directly to our bank account! In 2020/2021, Buddies raised over \$400 from this initiative – thanks in no small part to the 'plodders' who exercise and collect rubbish at the same time.



Fruit sales

As has been the case for the last few years, between March and June 2021 a small but energetic group harvested the 'reachable' avocados on Scott Grimmatt's property.

After multiple forays into the avocado jungle, the final collection was made near the end of June. Special thanks to Kendall Snowden, Thene Bell and Yokki Rother for their indomitable spirit, as well as the collection of other volunteers who donated their time (and blood). The generosity of Scott Grimmatt in donating avocados and custard apples enabled the pickers to work through COVID-19 despite all the restrictions and continue to do some fundraising for Buddies when other avenues were shut down. Grand total for 2021 was \$425.



The 2020 avocado haul from Scott Grimmatt's orchard, displayed on a table at Kendall and Yokki's home

Goodwill Wines

Buddies has continued our agreement with Goodwill Wines whereby Buddies receives \$2 from every bottle purchased by our supporters through their website. This raised \$144 in the year.

 <https://goodwillwine.com.au/charities/buddies-refugee-support-group>



Donations

Buddies continues to benefit from regular cash donations from many supporters.

In 2020, due to the strict COVID-19 restrictions, Buddies began to step up promotion of monthly donations, in lieu of the donations we were previously receiving at monthly meetings. By June 2021, Buddies had received an amazing \$8,673 in donations – all of which has been passed on to those in need on the Sunshine Coast, in Brisbane, and as far afield as Canada (via the Community Refugee Sponsorship Initiative).

Sausage sizzles

As has been the case for most volunteer organisations, COVID-19 has severely limited the events and fundraising Buddies could conduct in the 2020/2021 period. However, over the financial year Buddies and Noosa Welcomes Refugees ran enough sausage sizzles to raise \$392 for Buddies' support projects! Special thanks to all participants, especially Dee Williams and Penny Rivlin for organising.

“ By June 2021, Buddies had received an amazing \$8,673 in donations – all of which has been passed on to those in need on the Sunshine Coast, in Brisbane, and as far afield as Canada ”



Buddies

Hospitality and refugee support



Learn English Holiday

In 2021, the Learn English Holiday (LEH) team hosted a group of 31 people from the Romero Centre in Brisbane from Sunday 11 to Friday 16 April. The group consisted of 15 adults and 16 children ranging from two months to 60 years of age. Eleven friendly and caring local households – some families, some couples or singles – hosted our visitors.

We were wonderfully supported by Immanuel Lutheran College which allowed us to use the Environment Centre for our activities, and several Immanuel staff assisted in preparations, ran engaging sessions for our younger participants, or at the beach taught participants how to ride boogie boards and ensured everyone stayed safe in the water. Wildlife HQ's generous discounts made it possible for our participants to meet Australian wildlife, and our day at the beach was enhanced by the significantly reduced cost of fish and chips from Fisheries on the Spit.



An LEH class in April 2021

Once again classroom teachers and assistants, respectively 16 and 23, helped us enormously over the week and contributed greatly to the positive experiences reported by our guests. We were particularly pleased to have the involvement of Immanuel College and Montessori International College senior students as classroom volunteers, Maleny library staff who discussed libraries as a community base, a group of Griffith University medical students who explored health literacy, media studies and sports staff from Immanuel Lutheran College, and our marvellous indigenous teachers who share with us their understanding of dot painting and the didgeridoo.

Volunteers helped with morning teas and with driving participants to and from their homestay homes. Learn English Holiday is in fact run and made possible entirely by volunteers and without them – hosting, teaching classes, donating food, helping in classes, driving, playing together, raising money to fund our activities – we wouldn't be able to do it.

Buddies' sincere thanks goes to the (almost literally) tireless organisers of this flagship event – Kayla Szumer, Lesley Willcoxson, Margaret Norris, Ana Perez, Robin Dobson, Mel Bacon, Margaret Cameron – as well as the other people and organisations who made the April LEH possible.



Two letters received from participants

Hallo Sunshine Coast Amazing Buddies!!!

Thank You so much for the amazing experience our people had with You! We have heard wonderful things and they enjoyed it so much.

I have met today with S..... in the morning and she was so grateful for the experience, kindness, patience and friendliness of her hosts. She said that they are the most amazing people and they were so patient with the kids. She expressed deep gratitude for the opportunity to know Sunshine Coast Buddies. She really loved it so much! I guess it proves the truth that the human heart does not know borders, race, religion or customs but only friendship and love!

With Love and Gratitude, Beata

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Hi all,

Such a pleasure to work with you people. Though I was on leave in last few days I still received beautiful feedback through messages clients left about the program. A client is willing to meet me at tomorrow wanting to share the experience face to face. She said that's greatest days to her.

Good to see the 'Would I lie to you' quite popular. It was a short notice to clients for preparation. I'm glad they've enjoyed it so much!

Kind regards, Hui

New portfolio created – Refugee Liaison Coordinator

In the early part of 2021 the Nambour Community Centre referred three men to Buddies – each of them having different needs.

One (on a student visa but wanting permanent residency) needed volunteer hours to fulfil his community involvement which was part of his Masters studies as a Social Worker.

Another had refugee status and was looking for social interaction, financial & in-kind assistance.

The third man had been through an extensive process in an effort to gain permanent residency but unfortunately his efforts have resulted in him losing all rights. He receives no government assistance and has a huge financial debt to the government but no capacity to earn money.

In response to these needs, Buddies created a new 'portfolio position' – Refugee Liaison Coordinator. This role has been filled by Narelle Matheson (a retired Social Worker with lived experience in offshore detention camps) – with duties and responsibilities shared amongst the Buddies team.

The role includes face-to-face meetings and relationship building, coordination of accommodation and employment needs, coordination of donations (eg. food hampers), support with the provision of trade-based essentials (eg. Bunnings gift card) and help with budgeting and debt reduction.

“ The role has been filled by Narelle Matheson (a retired social worker with lived experience in offshore detention camps) – with duties and responsibilities shared amongst the Buddies team ”

Through this role, and particularly the work of Narelle and Len Mangan, Buddies has been able to build strong and no doubt long lasting relationships with these men. Buddies members have wrapped their arms around them and provided free accommodation for one, food parcels for another, have helped two to find work opportunities as well as providing one with an extensive tool kit, given financial support to two, and provided social support and friendship for all.

The man doing his masters in social work has found a placement in another state. The man with refugee status has gained valuable experience with one tradesman and is now seeking an apprenticeship. The asylum seeker is regrettably going through a rough patch at the moment but he is still committed to getting permanent residency and Buddies are committed to continue to support him and the other two men.



Service providers we support

In addition to the direct support we provide to refugees and people seeking asylum, we also work indirectly through other organisations that identify and provide for those most in need.

Romero Centre

Since 2017 Buddies has been working with the Romero Centre in Brisbane. The Romero Centre provides and connects asylum seekers living in Brisbane with practical support (like food and shelter), legal connections, English classes, medical care, trauma counselling, community events and more.



In 2020/2021, Buddies donated a total of \$3,150 to the Romero Centre.

During the recent COVID-19 restrictions, the needs of refugees have been ever more prevalent. In 2020/2021, Buddies has continued collecting non-perishable food and toiletries for refugees and asylum seekers. We have a number of 'drop-off' points, and the parcels are usually directed to one location for delivery to Brisbane. Thank you Scott Grimmett for your continued assistance with this vital service.

Communify

Communify Queensland is a community organisation located in Bardon, Brisbane which provides a diverse range of services to a diverse range of people, including people seeking asylum and refugees.

In 2020/2021, Buddies donated a total of \$2,950 to Communify towards food, accommodation and education for a number of Communify clients.



Indooroopilly Uniting Church Refugee Support Service

In 2020/2021, Buddies continued to provide financial and in-kind support to this group in Brisbane who provide practical support to needy asylum seekers and refugees – vulnerable people fleeing persecution and seeking Australia's protection.



Their current focus is helping asylum seekers and refugees complete complex immigration paperwork, providing access to volunteers and pro-bono lawyers. The Service also provides some supplementary food and encourages people to participate in weekday activities of the church as a way to integrate into the community.

Throughout the year, Buddies has maintained their professional and personal relationship with this group, and donated \$5,250 to their causes.

Brisbane On Arrival Refugee Support Group

The Brisbane On Arrival Refugee Support Group supports refugees in Brisbane Immigration Transit Accommodation (BITA), the government detention centre at Pinkenba. The group supports Medevac arrivals with their requirements such as phones, SIM cards, clothing, toiletries etc. as well as health and dental support whilst in onshore detention.

In 2020/2021, Buddies continued to provide financial and in-kind support to this group. Our financial contribution to their great work was \$2,000.

SPECIAL MENTION:**Matthew Flinders Anglican College**

In the leadup to Christmas 2020, Year 6 students of Matthew Flinders Anglican College (MFAC) turned words into actions while exploring the topic of refugees and disadvantaged groups in Australia.

Through the inspiration of Lesley Wilcoxson, and under the direction and encouragement of Katie Dawson, Year Level Coordinator, Year 6, and the other Year 6 teachers, the students made around 50 'Buddy Bags' for refugees. Each bag contained a range of 'essential items' that the students thought would make the lives of the recipients a little easier – water bottle, pens and paper, puzzles, balls, etc. These bags were delivered to the Romero Centre and Multicultural Australia, who were thrilled to receive them. The Romero Centre were also really grateful for the many bags of food that Year 6 had collected for them.

In addition, the college raised over \$1850 – all of which was donated to Buddies on condition they be used for Buddies work with refugees, in particular the Learn English Holiday program.



Membership and Finance

In the 2020/2021 financial year the Company membership fee was unchanged at \$10 per year. The membership year is 1 July to 30 June. As of June 2021, the Company had 76 members, a decrease from the previous year. This includes 16 monthly donors who pay a specific amount per month.

However, many people (not 'members') continue to donate to Buddies, and so the proportion of total funding from donations has remained relatively healthy.

Our Finance Committee consists of Clare Arico, Penny Rivlin, Dee Williams and Tricia Reade. We are extremely blessed to have a passionate and knowledgeable team guiding Buddies' financial future.

Buddies Refugee Support Group Ltd

Summary Statement of Accounts – F.Y. to 30 June 2021

Income

Membership Fees	980.00	4%
Donations	9,108.92	42%
Fundraising	11,409.10	52%
Other	300.00	1%
Total Income	21,798.02	100%

Expenditure

Operating costs	1,756.32	8%
Community Awareness	488.97	2%
Fundraising Costs	-	0%
Direct Support for Asylum Seekers & Refugees	5,641.45	25%
Donations to Refugee Support & Advocacy Groups	14,350.00	65%
Total Expenditure	22,236.74	100%

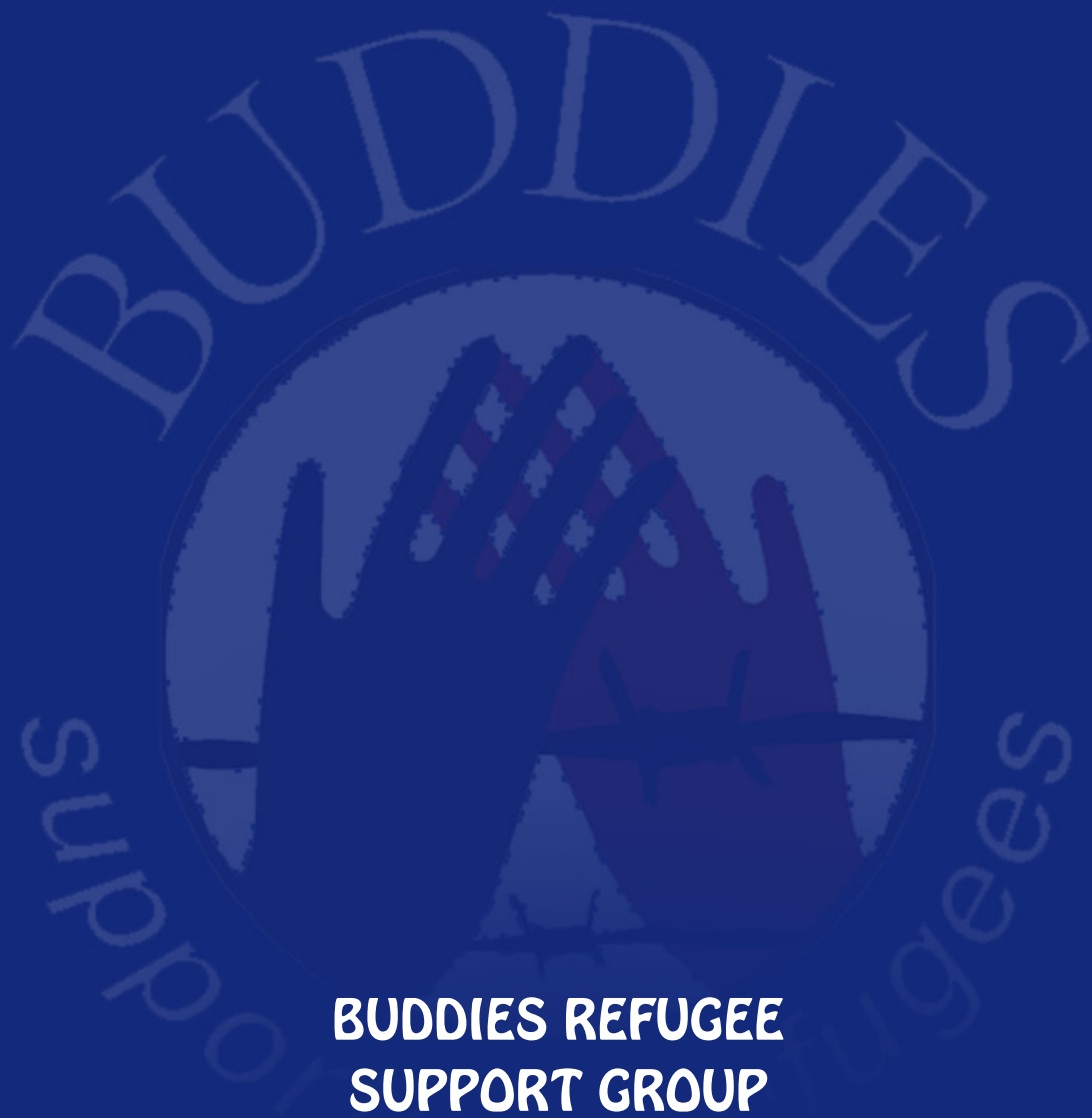
Cash at Bank

As at 1 July 2020	6,241.69
Plus Income	21,798.02
	<u>28,039.71</u>
Less Expenditure	22,236.74
Balance at bank 30 June 2021	<u>5,802.97</u>
Less June accruals	2,310.00
Funds Available for Disbursement	3,492.97

Our supporters & partners

Buddies is grateful for the support of the following groups:

- Amnesty International (Maroochydore)
- Asylum Seeker Resource Centre
- Bunnings Warehouse
- Community
- Eumundi Markets
- Fisheries on the Spit
- Goodwill Wines
- Immanuel Lutheran College, Buderim
- Indooroopilly Uniting Church Refugee Support Service
- Matthew Flinders Anglican College, Buderim
- Multicultural Australia
- Nambour Community Centre
- Noosa Council
- Noosa Welcomes Refugees
- Romero Multicultural Hub (Romero Centre)
- St Mark's Anglican Church, Buderim
- Sunshine Coast Refugee Action Network
- Sunshine Coast Regional Council
- University of the Sunshine Coast
- Welcome to Maleny
- Wildlife HQ



**BUDDIES REFUGEE
SUPPORT GROUP**

AUGUST 2021

**This report compiled by Paul McKinlay
Layout by Wendy Oakley**