

Buddies Meeting, 22 January 2016

Chairman: Margaret Landbeck

Apologies: Esther Pockrandt, Terry Boyce, Brenda Dryburgh, Kayla Szumer, Kendall Snowden, Yokki Rother, Bob Cullen, Zanette Perinoni, Lisa MacDonald, Sheila Merriman, D'Arcy and Patrick Buick

Margaret Landbeck welcomed a handful of newcomers.

Finance

Dee Williams presented the Finance Report and spoke briefly about our donations to MDA and our need to make a decision about our donations to them and the BISG.

Governance Group Report

Margaret Norris gave a brief report from the governance group and explained its function. More about the working of the Buddies Immigration Support Group at the February meeting.

Walk to Canberra

Helen Thomas told the meeting of a father and son who are walking from Adelaide to Canberra as a protest.

Follow up from December's Forum

Margaret explained that this was not a very typical meeting and clarified what Buddies does. This involves fundraising, hospitality, making connections, facilitating support. She also spoke about the importance of volunteers. At the moment it is being left to a small hard core of people who have been doing it for a long time.

Lobby Group

Audrey talked briefly about the work of the Lobby Group.

Learn English Holidays

Margaret Norris spoke about the work of the LEH (Learn English Holidays) which are now to be held in the school holidays at St John's College, Nambour. The first LEH for this year will be held in early April and Margaret said they are always grateful for volunteers. They are hoping the students will bring their families as it is school holiday time. There is a planning meeting on 25th February.

Picnics

Margaret Landbeck called for volunteers to run a picnic for refugees who come up from Brisbane. Carmel Dobson said she had it in mind but at this stage had not made any firm arrangements.

Lobbying

Buddies were urged to access and sign petitions and Gabby Sutherland spoke about the importance and usefulness of Facebook. She also told us that the children who appeared on the TV documentary about Nauru are now being interviewed for resettlement.

Fund Raising

Concerts - Margaret Landbeck spoke of the concerts put on by Kayla as fundraisers and hoped they would continue.

Car Parking at Eumundi - Kendall and Yokki are no longer running the car parking volunteers for the Eumundi markets. These will now be run by Zanette Perinoni and David Walters. This is an invaluable fundraiser for Buddies.

Co-ordinating Events (Calendar)

Carmel Dobson spoke about the need to have a calendar of events to keep on the website. She was also keen that Buddies volunteers got together for a dinner at some stage. She felt we should hold at least two big events in the year including a picnic for refugees. She again called for volunteers and for people to connect with her.

Supporting Individuals and BITA

Rada van der Werff and Margaret Norman spoke about their visits to BITA and how the atmosphere and treatment of the internees had changed a great deal due to the number of criminals now being held there. Changes include the handcuffing of refugees when they are making medical visits. They suggested that all of us do not miss an opportunity to talk to the public about Buddies' work whenever out and about shopping. Both told moving stories.

Community Education

It was stressed that we need to do more community education by getting people out into the community and schools. Gabby and Lisa are doing a great job in spreading the word in their areas of Noosa and Maleny – they speak a lot about their experiences of teaching in Nauru. Gabby said that they would be happy to speak to groups in the Maroochydore area as well. Margaret Landbeck felt we need to rev up the churches to become more active and better informed.

Some discussion on Young Buddies

Since Young Buddies is in 'limbo' at present we need to try and develop a Young Buddies group particularly harnessing the University students. It was suggested by one of the newcomers, Jane, who works at the University, that it would be a good idea to make contact with staff there.

Community connections

Fergus Fitzgerald suggested Steve Dixon MP should be approached as a conduit between us and the anti Moslem and far right members of our society. Margaret mentioned that the move to make the Sunshine Coast a Refugee Welcome Zone had not met with success but hope was not lost for the future.

Skill sets

Margaret also asked that anyone who has special skills would let us know.

Equipment

Margaret Norris holds the Buddies banner and that Jane Giles held other equipment belonging to Buddies, all of which are listed on the website. People MUST record when they have taken and returned things they have borrowed.

Next meeting - February 26th

The meeting was advised that the speaker for next month would be a refugee lawyer and possibly an asylum seeker. The meeting closed at 12.30pm.

Chairman for next meeting: Gabby Sutherland. Notetaker: Carole Boulanger