

The first Living in Australia Program (LAP) for 2024 was held at Immanuel Lutheran College, Buderim from 7-12 April. As usual, the support provided by Immanuel was wonderful and the Environmental Centre was a great learning facility for both adults and children.

This program was a little unusual in that the range of countries represented by participants was quite small – Colombia, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Syria, and one Afghani. Thirty two of the participants came from Brisbane and were referred by Multicultural Australia and a further eleven came from Sunshine Coast, being members of the Syrian family that Buddies has settled through the Community Refugee Integration and Settlement Program (CRISP) and members of the Congolese family also settled (by another group) as part of the CRISP program.

In total 13 of the participants were under the age of 15, and most of the participants had almost no or beginner English so the challenges for homestay hosts and volunteers were more linguistic than they have been in the recent past. Nevertheless, when asked for comments on the feedback sheet, the participants made clear what the program meant to them:

- Thank you
- Thank you
- I really liked the work you guys did
- I want to tell thank you to all who organised this successful week
- I want to thank the team
- I am happy
- The environment is very beautiful; everything is well organised
- Patience of the volunteers and teachers. The values of Australia
- The environment is very beautiful and everything is well organised
- I hope to you happy life
- We needed more fun activities
- Thank you so much for everything; Big love.
- You are really friendly and lovely
- You are so lovely, friendly
- You are amazing people
- The values of Australians are very good
- Thank you so much
- Everything is good. I liked.

Of course, just as it takes a village to raise a child, it takes many unsung heroes to get a Living in Australia Program Working. Amongst those heroes are not only the homestay hosts, drivers, teachers, and classroom volunteers (including those from Immanuel and four other schools) and but also the wonderful Immanuel sports staff and students who taught our participants to ride boogie boards and kept them safe at the beach.

Once again, Fisheries on the Spit provided the fish and chip lunch at a significantly discounted price, Wildlife HQ also significantly discounted their entry fees so our

guests could marvel at the Australian wildlife, and St John's College Nambour lent us their bus (fully fuelled) so we could transport our guests to and from Brisbane and from the beach to the zoo. Apart from letting us use the Environmental Centre for the program, Immanuel College did our photocopying and lent us their sporting equipment, and Gayla (Immanuel's Chaplain) ensured that every need was met and question answered. A group from Immanuel Church provided delicious morning teas, including freshly baked treats and Kendall was, as always, available to help.

The September 2024 Living in Australia Program will be held Matthew Flinders Anglican College, Buderim, from 16-20 September. Homestay hosts, classroom volunteers and drivers make this program possible, so closer to the time we will be inviting you to participate if you are able to do so.