



**Bulletin no 46**

**December 2019**

### **The people we are visiting**

We seem to have entered a new stage in our support activities in the form of people who have been transferred from Nauru and are living in community detention. They are receiving medical and dental services but there are severe restrictions on what they may do. While their rent is paid and they have a small allowance to buy food, they cannot work or study nor stay overnight with a friend. There is no end date to this detention, on top of the six years they have already spent on Nauru. The young people we have met are all in their mid-twenties. They are trying to be hopeful.

Our visiting group now has ten people providing visits to households. In most cases two visitors go to a house together, so a number of people are visiting more than one family or group of people. Some visits are less frequent than they were a few years ago. These households are:

- Mother and father with 5 children
- Mother and daughter, now 13
- Mother and father with a 3 year old
- Mother with 4 children
- Mother with 1 child
- 3 adults who share a house
- Mother with 2 children, recently separated from her husband
- Mother with 2 children
- Mother and father with young adult daughter

Our last newsletter mentioned a young woman recently transferred from Nauru, presumably under the Medevac laws. She has been joined by another young woman from Nauru so they have each other for support. Both women are

from Somalia and probably have only basic education at best. They are keen to improve their English. They can use a phone and read text messages, but it is hard to assess their literacy skills beyond this.

These young women asked us to visit a friend of theirs, 'Joelle', also from Nauru and living in Clayton with her husband. She is from Somalia and he is an Iraqi man she met on Nauru. Her literacy skills are basic and she has had very little education. Being female and growing up in a war-torn country, she had no opportunity for education. In the 6 years they spent on Nauru they learned some English, spoken and written. 'Joelle' has a Certificate 2 in Hospitality, completed on Nauru. This couple is in community detention and manage on a small allowance. Their house is provided by the federal government and is basic in furnishings and household things. They did not have a change of sheets, a warm doona or blanket, and only one bath towel. Thanks to our generous donors we have been able to buy them a bigger bed, towels and sheets etc.

All these people have regular medical and dental appointments to attend. They are seeing trauma counselors from Foundation House. 'Ahmed' in Clayton has kidney stones and will need surgery.

The generosity and kindness of others makes it possible to do all that we do. We are delighted and humbled to receive such affirmation from individuals, groups in the parish community and the parish schools.

A recent big request is for help with study costs. As time goes by the cost of things people ask of us seems to be rising.



(Stock image)

*The annual Oaks Day Lunch was wonderfully supported by parishioners of St Joseph's and St Roch's. Seventy people dressed in their finest race wear gathered at the Malvern Vale Hotel to enjoy a delicious lunch and share an afternoon of friendship and fun. Door Prizes, "Best Hat" competition, Raffle and a Sweep added to the fun of the afternoon. Just on \$1800 was raised to support the work of the St Joseph's Refugee Support Group. We extend our sincere thanks to all who attended.*

## **Young asylum seekers in Europe : A report**

A website in Europe, INFOMIGRANTS, has released a report *(dated 19 November, 2019)* on the need for asylum seekers, especially the young, to be integrated into society.

The FRA (*European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights*) has been looking into the integration of young refugees in 28 countries across the EU. Many granted protection to young people, but all too often their potential is wasted by frequent problems with the asylum process itself. Problems range from delays, blocks to family reunification, and access to education to a lack of benefits and support networks for those who turn 18 and are suddenly expected to fend for themselves.

These problems were raised repeatedly:

- Long delays in processing
- Legal uncertainty
- Separation from family
- Unstable housing conditions
- Language difficulties
- Interrupted social support
- Limited educational and training opportunities

Some asylum seekers spoke of how difficult it was to be asked repeatedly to recount all the bad things that had happened to force them to leave their homes, and since leaving their home country. "They ask you in several different places about your situation, your real problem. It gets to you very badly. ...there are things you do not want to talk about, and they'll ask you all that again."

Another problem is the mental pressure coming from families left behind. They think the person who has already reached the EU "has it all." At the same time, that person feels guilty and may be unable to take full advantage of opportunities such as school or employment because they feel their difficulties are trivial compared with what their family might be going through.

To access education, young people have to learn the language of the host country. Sometimes they are ghettoized in classes with other asylum seekers and refugees and have difficulty integrating in the formal education system. Integration managers comment that young people were highly motivated when they arrive, but if they have to wait too long - frequently two years – that motivation is lost.

Delays in school enrolment also increased drop-out rates. Being forced to repeat classes several times with ever-younger children can be dispiriting to those trying to catch up on years of missed education due to their flight.

Some wanting to finish high school and continue to university felt that the schools were directing them towards vocational training. Although they had access to education on paper, they were often unable to access it because of practical barriers, or even physical ones such as being moved from a youth home to an adult place in a different place, often then dropping out of school.

Unsafe housing and being frequently moved from known support networks or friends also made many young people easy prey for criminals. Withdrawal of support as they turned 18, and therefore access to funds, also meant they might commit crimes out of necessity.

Young migrants were often victims of exploitation in the workplace, violence, theft, fraud and hate crime. Female migrants were often affected by sexual and gender-based violence. They often felt the police treated them unfairly, stopped and searched them more. Under-reporting of crimes perpetrated on them was also rife, according to the report.



***To all our donors,  
our helpers and  
parishioners, to all  
asylum seekers, and  
to all who seek  
peace – may the  
blessings of  
Christmas be  
abundantly yours.***

## **How to donate**

**Cheques** should be made payable to "St. Joseph's Catholic Church Refugee Support Group", and sent to: St Joseph's Parish Refugee Support Group,  
St. Joseph's Parish,  
47 Stanhope Street,  
Malvern 3144

*If you require a receipt, please include your name and postal address.*

**Direct Debit** : Funds can be transferred into the account over the counter at a NAB branch, or by using your internet or telephone banking facility.

**Bank details:** St. Joseph's Parish Refugee Support Group  
CDF Account with NAB BSB : 083 347 Acc.No. 392 506 587

*Please provide your surname in the reference section If you require a receipt, please email your name and postal address to Barry O'Reilly – [barryoreilly2@bigpond.com](mailto:barryoreilly2@bigpond.com)*