

Minutes of Buddies meeting, Sunday 28 August 2016

Chairperson: Zanette Perinoni

Notetaker: Audrey Raymond

New visitors were welcomed and apologies accepted from Kayla, Rada, Fergus, Shona, Penny and Dorothy

Guest speaker

Dr Paul Stevenson OAM, a noted psychologist and traumatologist, addressed the meeting. He worked as a counsellor on a number of occasions on Manus until he was sacked for speaking out about conditions on Manus and Nauru.

He was responsible for handing over 2,000 leaked files from between July 2014 – 2015 of “incident reports” sent to Wilson Security. As a result of this exposé the Guardian received three million hits although he pointed out that more came from the UK than from Australia. These files have been sent to the International Criminal Court in The Hague.

Paul spoke in some detail about the timing of reporting “incidents” and explained that because of these reports Minister Dutton cannot say that reports of self harm and abuse are “unsubstantiated”.

He spoke in detail about conditions on the two islands where reports of suicide attempts are four times the average in Australia.

There is an appalling waste of money in keeping Manus and Nauru open e.g. 600 guards in charge of 1100 detainees, \$8000 per refugee per month paid to Nauru by the Australian Government, \$65,000 day for staff accommodation and \$1 million a month for food. Paul estimates it costs Australia over \$5 billion a year to keep less than 2,000 people in detention on Manus and Nauru.

Paul ended on an upbeat note though, saying he believed things were beginning to change for the better and that the Government was now on the back foot.

General meeting

Nambour Togetherness: Zanette spoke about Nambour Togetherness, a meeting where she signed up four new Buddies and received an anonymous donation of \$100.

Diversity Week: Buddies attracted attention at USC’s Diversity Week where Zanette ran an information stall. She signed up two pages of students who wanted to receive the Bulletin, with two also wanting to be involved with Facebook and social media.

Multicultural Conversations: Zanette spoke briefly about the very interesting and useful Multicultural Conversations and in particular the large forum held the previous day at USC, sponsored by the Sunshine Coast Council. Zanette, Audrey, Margaret Landbeck and Fergus FitzGerald attended this multicultural gathering and listened to various informative speakers and took part in interesting and useful working groups.

Facebook and Anneliese: Zanette announced that Annaliese Broadaway is expecting a baby soon and thanked her for her past updating of the Buddies Facebook page. She asked for someone to take over the running of Facebook.

Marathon donation: Zanette mentioned that a young mother of two small children, Victoria Vanstone, ran in the Mooloolabah marathon and raised \$750 for Buddies.

Learn English Holidays: Margaret Norris spoke about the next Learn English Holiday to be held 25-30 September and called on anyone who may be able to offer accommodation and also help with teaching.

Free the Children Nauru petition: Gabby Sutherland asked Buddies to circulate and sign her group’s hard copy petition asking the Government to transfer all detainees on Manus and Nauru to Australia.

Finance report: Audrey explained that as the Finance Group was split on the matter, she was asking the meeting to support a \$300 contribution towards legal fees being incurred by doctors, nurses and others who’ve announced they’re taking the Government to the High Court over gag rules silencing them from speaking out over abuse in detention. A vote was taken and passed unanimously.

Brisbane Symphony Orchestra concert: Kendall Snowden spoke about the next Brisbane Symphony Orchestra concert at Kawana Sunday 11 September. She explained that as a fundraiser Buddies provide sandwiches, cakes and slices for afternoon tea at these concerts and appealed for contributions.

Next meeting

Sunday 25 September 2016

Chairperson: Michael Eyre

Notetaker: Jan Sweet