

Buddies Refugee Support Group

Annual Report 2016-17



introduction

This report has been prepared for the annual general meeting (AGM) of Buddies Refugee Support Group Ltd (Buddies Ltd) on 28 May 2017. It provides a summary of important achievements and activities of Buddies Ltd since the inaugural general meeting (IGM) on 26 June 2016.*

** The reason that the AGM was held one month early was as a consequence of serious internal issues affecting the proper operation of Buddies Ltd. These issues were not resolved at an open meeting of Buddies on 23 April 2017. Consequently, a number of members decided to step down from formal roles in the director's group and finance group. It was therefore desirable to hold an early AGM to enable the election of new directors and company secretary.*



Cover image: Participants in the Learn English Holiday program, held on the 2-7 April 2017 at St John's College Nambour

corporate information

Buddies Ltd was registered in Queensland as a non-listed public company limited by guarantee by ASIC on 6 July 2015. The current directors of Buddies Ltd, who were elected at the IGM, are Fergus FitzGerald, Zanette Perinoni and the Multicultural Development Association (MDA), with its nominated representative being Mitra Khakbaz. The company secretary is Margaret Norris.

Buddies Ltd was registered as a charity by the Australian Charities and Not-for-profit Commission on 23 September 2016, effective 1 July 2016. Buddies Ltd was also endorsed for charity tax concessions on 26 September 2016. However, the application for a deductible gift recipient with the ATO was unsuccessful as Buddies Ltd could not meet the strict criteria as a charitable public benevolent institution.

Directors' meetings by the governance group were held on 5 August and 29 November 2016, and 7 April 2017.



membership & finances

A total of 155 people and one corporation (MDA) are currently members of Buddies Ltd, compared to 148 people and MDA in 2015-16. This includes 27 members whose membership was carried forward from 2015-16 because they joined after 31 March 2016.

As explained in the 2015-16 annual report, the initial governance group decided to distinguish those people, previously considered members of Buddies prior to incorporation and who receive the weekly e-Bulletin, but have not joined Buddies Ltd, as 'supporters'. There are currently 1251 such 'supporters' compared to 1059 a year ago.

FINANCES

The total revenue for the 11 months July 2016 – May 2017 from donations, fundraising and membership fees is \$23648.80. The total disbursements during the same period is \$26,337.24 including direct support for asylum seekers and refugees, donations to refugee support and advocacy groups and operating expenses. Available funds, as at 28 May 2017, are \$4513.29.

An independent audit of Buddies finances was undertaken by Maureen Tullio of Kamp Business accountants (see page 11 of this document). The auditor reported that the financial records present fairly the income and expenditure of Buddies Ltd its statement of affairs for the period July 2016 to April 2017, in accordance with the cash basis of accounting used. The auditor made a number of recommendations to enhance the recording and reporting of all transactions, including the use of a cash book account and obtaining receipts wherever possible. These recommendations will be adopted by the incoming finance group.

A detailed summary of finances is provided in the second part of this report.

A copy of the audit report is provided in the third part of this report.

activities

Key events and activities undertaken by Buddies during 2016-17 are summarised below:

ASYLUM SEEKER AND REFUGEE FRIENDSHIP AND DIRECT SUPPORT ACTIVITIES

- Learn English Holiday (LEH) and home-stay programs for up to 30 participants each time, including families, from more than 9 different countries, now run entirely in-house by Buddies' volunteers – week-long programs in September and April that provide important learning and cultural exchange opportunities for 'students', host families and volunteers and often lead to long-term friendships
- LEH reunion picnic, including participants over the last 5 years of the program – Roma Street Parklands, December
- Buddies Immigration Support Group – direct support for 7 'asylum seeker friends' through the legal process in their claims for protection, including paying legal fees and associated costs; total \$9495 during 2016-17, with \$4,500 reimbursed or committed to by applicants
- Salvos Legal Humanitarian Asylum Seeker Clinic, Brisbane - financial donations totaling \$11,000 (including re-allocating \$6000 donated to MDA) to directly support approximately 40 asylum seekers (singles, couples and families) through the legal process in their claims for protection
- Donations through MDA for direct support for asylum seekers and refugees in greater Brisbane area; total \$1500 in 2016-17
- Brisbane Immigration Transit Accommodation visits – regularly throughout the year, Buddies is one of the remaining organisations still permitted to visit • MDA Brisbane refugee women's picnic at the Spit, host – July

activities (continued)

COMMUNITY AWARENESS EVENTS & ACTIVITIES

- Welcome to Australia Walk Together, lead organisation – Cottontree, October
- Multicultural Community Conversations project, Sunshine Coast council, partner – development of Multicultural Action Plan released, May
- Diversity Week, University of the Sunshine Coast, support – Sippy Downs, August
- Festuri multicultural festival, support – Nambour, November
- Schools and universities, presentations – Immanuel College, Sunshine Coast Grammar, USC and U3A
- International Readers and Writers festival, guest speaker – Coolum, September
- Buddies open monthly meetings, guest speakers – e.g. Dr Paul Stevenson Nauru files exposé, Elizabeth Roberts USC on asylum seekers in transit, Indonesia, Ehsan Azadi on current protection visa claim process
- Media interviews, letters-to-the-editor – local TV and radio stations, and print media
- Weekly e-Bulletin – over 1200 subscribers
- Buddies website and Facebook

LOBBYING AND ADVOCACY

- Letters and informal meetings with state and federal politicians, including petitions
- Financial support for legal challenge to on-going operation of Manus Island detention centre
- Financial support for High Court challenge to Border Force Act by teachers and medical professionals

FUNDRAISING EVENTS & ACTIVITIES

- Eumundi market car parking attendants – monthly on Wednesday & Saturday
- Classical music concert at Caloundra Uniting Church – “The Refraction Quartet”, April
- Sharing proceeds with the newly formed Sunshine Coast Climate Action Now group from a public film screening of “Before the Flood”, April
- Afternoon teas at Brisbane Symphony Orchestra concerts – September and November

activities (continued)

- Sale of donated produce and materials; garage sales etc. at Buddies meetings and other events
- Donations: including regular monthly direct debit; in the donations “box” at monthly meetings and public events; and one off donations, including from a marathon runner
- Donations from other organisations: including Maleny school students (from Harmony Day), Women OutFront Maleny; McGrath Real Estate Community Giveback program; and Laurel Drumbell from book sales

OTHER ACTIVITIES

Buddies celebrated the 15th anniversary of its formation in April this year at a dinner attended by current and mostly long-term supporters, including the ‘founder’ Barbara Brewster. This is a significant milestone for any community group. Buddies has developed an increasingly high profile on the Sunshine Coast and more broadly as a lead organisation for refugee and asylum seeker support through the significant and sustained efforts of committed community members over the last 15 years.



outlook

The fact that Buddies continues to grow strongly with increased Bulletin subscribers, members of Buddies Ltd and up to 10 new attendees at each monthly meeting, reflects the increasing concern in the community with the government's harsh and inhumane treatment of asylum seekers. Sadly, the need for Buddies to provide a vehicle for those in the community seeking a more compassionate and generous response to the unprecedented global humanitarian crisis is greater than ever.

Buddies is in a strong position to continue to provide emotional and material support to asylum seekers and refugees in the greater Sunshine Coast region and beyond through assistance, advice, advocacy, lobbying decision makers and community education for a more compassionate and just treatment for those seeking our nation's protection from persecution.

Buddies can increase its effectiveness and reach by building and strengthening partnerships with other aligned community groups, such as Welcome to Maleny, Women OutFront, Noosa Welcomes refugees, Caloundra Catholic Church Social Justice Network, Sunshine Coast Community Refugee Support Group, Caloundra Uniting Church and Nambour Community Centre, as well as the Sunshine Coast Council through the Multicultural Action Plan. There also opportunities to expand the already strong partnership with MDA for the mutual benefit of our respective 'clients'.

In order to realise this opportunity, all Buddies members and supporters need to stand together with a common purpose, based on the core values of respect, compassion and generosity that have underpinned the organisation since its inception, to heal the internal divisions that are currently besetting the group. It is essential that new people step forward and take on more of the roles that are essential to Buddies' future operations.

Fergus FitzGerald
Director
Buddies Refugee Support Group Ltd

28 May 2017

finance summary

July 2016 – May 2017



This financial report summarises the revenue and disbursements for the 11 months from the inaugural general meeting on 26 June 2016 to the annual general meeting on 28 May 2017. The financial statement is based on audited financial records up to 23 April 2017.

Available funds, as at 26 June 2016 \$7197.73

Donations

'The Box' at monthly meetings	1811.50
Regular monthly donations – direct to bank account	2015.00
Other general one-off donations	410.00
Maleny & River primary schools' donations – Harmony Day	250.00
Laurel Drumbrell book sales	700.00
Women OutFront, Maleny – film night	100.00
Diversity Week at University of Sunshine Coast	106.50
Victoria from Sunshine Coast marathon run	750.00
McGrath Real Estate Caloundra – Community Giveback program	500.00
Buddies stall at Walk Together event	12.45
Classical concert, Caloundra	27.25
Sub-total	6682.70

Fundraising

Car parking volunteering - Eumundi market	6083.00
Brisbane Symphony Orchestra concerts – afternoon teas	750.00
Buddies classical concert, Caloundra Uniting Church & afternoon tea	1456.00
Raffle at classical concert Caloundra	330.00
Sale of products and drinks at Walk Together event, Cottontree	138.50
Sale of products at Festuri festival, Nambour	165.00
Share from Sunshine Coast Climate Action Now film – “Before the Flood”	88.00
Garage sales	538.10
For April Learn English Holiday program	800.00
Sales of fruit & produce	1897.50
Sub-total	12246.10

Other

Regular membership of Buddies Ltd – 144 renewals*	720.00
Gold membership – MDA	500.00
Reimbursement of legal fees – 2 asylum seeker 'friends' of Buddies	3500.00
Sub-total	4720.00

TOTAL INCOME 23648.80

**Excludes memberships carried forward from 2015-16*

OUTLAYS

Operating expenses

Annual company registration fee - ASIC	47.00
Public liability insurance premium	755.00
Audit fee for financial records 2016-17 – Kamp Business Accountants	156.00
Buddies website annual fee	156.20
Guest speakers' travel costs – to attend Buddies meetings	25.00
Buderim War Memorial Community Association - membership 2017	40.00
St Mary's Church, Buderim donation – use of amenities for meetings	300.00
Learn English Holiday program - cost of venue hire (September)	412.50
Learn English Holiday program – stationery, copying & morn tea	127.83
Learn English Holiday program – entertainment (April)	470.00
Learn English Holiday program – prize for raffle (April)	50.00
Walk Together community event – cost of entertainment & first aid	678.00
Capital purchases – pull-up banner	79.00
Fee for stall at Festuri festival	30.00
Cost of performers for fundraising classical concert	700.00
Sub-total	4026.53

Direct support for asylum seekers & refugees

Fees to registered migration agents to represent asylum seeker claims for protection visas for 7 'friends' of Buddies	9495.00
Learn English Holiday programs – students travel costs (2 events)	1145.00
Bus transport for MDA women's picnic to Sunshine Coast	500.00
Afghan refugee volleyball team, Brisbane – championship fee	350.00
Donation for disability equipment for asylum seeker	500.00
Sub-total	11990.00

Donations to refugee support & advocacy groups

MDA monthly payments – direct support for asylum seekers & refugees	4000.00
Salvos Legal Humanitarian Asylum Seeker Clinic – assist asylum seekers with protection visa applications	5000.00
Refugee Action Collective – legal challenge to Manus Island, including fee	520.71
High Court challenge to Border Force Act by teachers and medical professionals	300.00
Donation to Dr Paul Stevenson to support Nauru files exposé	500.00
Sub-total	10320.71

TOTAL OUTLAYS **26337.24**

Available funds, as at 28 May 2017 **4513.29**

audit report

May 2017



15 May 2017

Buddies Refugee Support Group Ltd
467 Diddillibah Road
DIDDILLIBAH QLD 4559

Dear Committee

RE: REPORT TO MEMBERS
REVIEW –1ST JULY 2016 TO 23RD APRIL 2017

We thank you for the opportunity to peruse your records and give the following opinions to the committee in regard to the appropriate accounting practices used by the group.

We note that the elected Committee of the organisation is responsible for the preparation and presentation of the financial reports and the information contained therein, and has determined that the basis of accounting used is appropriate to the needs of the members.

As is common for organisations of this type, it is not practicable for the organisation to maintain an effective system of internal control over donations, subscriptions and other fundraising activities until their initial entry in the accounting records. Accordingly, our review in relation to fundraising was limited to amounts recorded.

In our opinion, the financial reports present fairly the Income and Expenditure of the organisation for the period of this review and its statements of affairs during that period in accordance with the cash basis of accounting as described above.

Income and Expenses Records

We have reviewed the method of recording the income and expenses of the group and would suggest that the Treasurer commence the use of a Columned Cash Book to record these in the future.

The use of a Cash Book will enable the group to more accurately record the transactions and help to avoid the small errors that inevitably occur without its use.

We suggest that each month's transactions be recorded and balanced off, noting the category of each of the income and expense. Each month should then be reconciled to the bank account, as a double check to their accuracy.

Monthly Reports to Committee

Can we suggest that the Opening and Closing Balance of the Bank account be noted on each of these monthly reports.

Receipts

We understand that it may be difficult to always issue receipts for monies received but all efforts should be made to achieve this.

Payments

We would suggest that all effort is made to obtain copies of all expenses and to hold them in your files.

Should you wish to discuss any of these issues further, please do not hesitate to contact our office.

Regards



Greg Kamp FCPA, CTA
Kamp Business Accountants





BUDDIES REFUGEE SUPPORT GROUP LTD

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