

Buddies Refugee Support Group



ANNUAL REPORT 2019–20



Acknowledgment

We acknowledge Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders as the first people of Australia. We acknowledge the language and cultural diversity and traditions that existed in this land for tens of thousands of years before the arrival of the first settlers' fleet. We acknowledge Kabi Kabi and Jinibara Peoples of the hinterland and coast of the Sunshine Coast where Buddies members walk today.

In this spirit of recognition, reconciliation and respect Buddies members work to create a community fostering belonging, welcome and inclusion.



Introduction

Buddies Refugee Support Group Ltd is registered in Queensland as a non-listed public company limited by guarantee. At the AGM of 25 August 2019, Len Mangan, Paul McKinlay, Mo Darbas and Lynne Johnston were elected to serve as Directors, James Fowler accepted the role of Bookkeeper, and Andrea Douglas was re-appointed by the Directors as Company Secretary. The current Directors thank the previous Directors – Scott Grimmett, Lesley Wilcoxson and Mitra Khakbaz – for their tremendous work, skills, passion and knowledge.

In November 2019, Mo Darbas and Lynne Johnston resigned as Directors, and Andrea Douglas stepped in as an Acting Director to fulfil the constitutional requirements of Buddies requiring a minimum of three Directors. Buddies thanks Mo and Lynne for their direction and input while Directors.

During 2019/2020, despite difficulties from many aspects, Buddies continued to make a difference through fundraising events and activities, Learn English Holiday programs, community engagement and education programs, and providing much-needed financial support to individuals and the organisations that coordinate support to the most vulnerable members of our



community – people seeking asylum with no income support. Our work builds the capacity of the communities we work with and live within to connect with the stories of real people affected by policy decisions. These collective efforts have enabled us to slowly challenge the myth, and change the negative narrative surrounding people seeking asylum.

As we end the 2019/2020 year the Board of Directors are deeply grateful for the many people who continue to strive to assist refugees and seekers of asylum in a myriad of ways. This includes the members of the Finance group – James Fowler, Dee Williams, Penny Rivlin and Tricia Reade – who work very hard to ensure Buddies' limited funds are allocated wisely and we maintain our accountability, and to Wendy Oakley who ensures that over 1100 people each fortnight receive Buddies' and refugee-related news through the Buddies Bulletin. In April 2020 Wendy resumed her additional role of overseeing the Buddies website. Thank you to Wendy and to Mike Law for his consistent, prompt and insightful additions to the Buddies website – it continues to be one of our flagship connections.

We thank our members for their financial, gift and food donations, as well as volunteering to attend and support events, attend meetings, and encouraging others to support and take a stand against negative policies. This annual report provides a summary outline of the activities and initiatives that have taken place during the year.

– Buddies' Directors



“ the Board of Directors are deeply grateful for the many people who continue to strive to assist refugees and seekers of asylum in a myriad of ways ”

Buddies' mission

“ We advocate for the just and compassionate treatment of refugees and asylum seekers, consistent with the international human rights standards that Australia helped develop and has endorsed.

We support policies towards refugees and asylum seekers that reflect respect, decency and traditional Australian generosity to those in need, while advancing Australia's international standing and national interests.”

Buddies' values

Respect –
for everyone's human rights

Compassion –
for those suffering discrimination and persecution

Generosity –
to help those in need

Welcome –
to those from somewhere else



What we do

Hospitality

We get to know refugees and people seeking asylum living in south-east Queensland. We offer practical support to new arrivals. We provide people seeking asylum and refugees with advice and assistance to access professional services including legal, medical and allied health services.

Education

We seek the truth about refugee and asylum issues in Australia and make this public through meetings and forums, talks to schools and community groups, fortnightly newsletters, web and social media.

Advocacy

We lobby politicians and other decision makers and use publicity to advocate for the just and compassionate treatment of refugees and asylum seekers.

Fundraising

We raise funds and provide direct financial assistance to refugees and people seeking asylum and to the advocacy and support organisations they rely on.



community awareness, advocacy & education



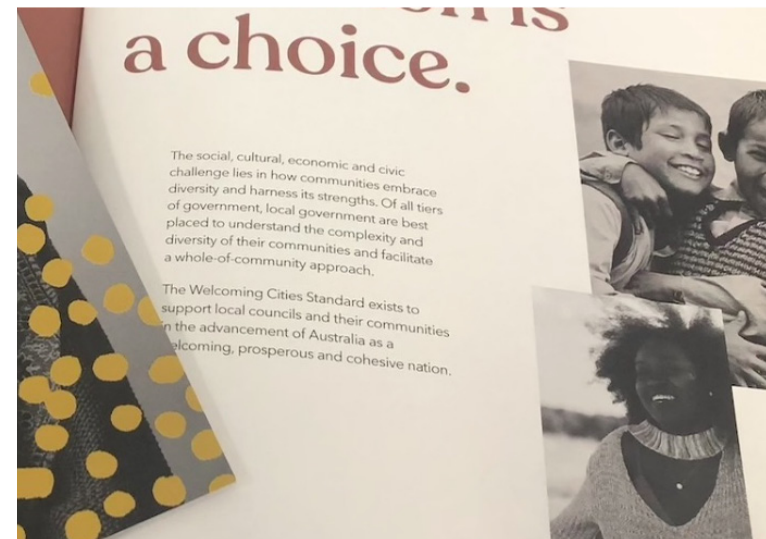
“ All advocacy is, at its core,
an exercise in empathy ”

– Samantha Power, United States Ambassador to the
United Nations (2013-2017)



Refugee Welcome Zone / Welcoming Cities

In 2019/2020, Buddies continued to investigate support for a Refugee Welcome Zone declaration for Sunshine Coast Regional Council, seeking a commitment in spirit to welcome refugees into the community, uphold the human rights of refugees, demonstrate compassion for refugees and enhance cultural and religious diversity in the community. With like-minded groups on the Sunshine Coast, Buddies has also further explored the alternate Welcoming Cities program. To date, neither process has advanced significantly.



The Bulletin

Wendy Oakley continues to publish The Bulletin rain, hail or shine, and it continues to be one of Buddies' most important communication tools. Distributed by email, the Bulletin provides Buddies with an opportunity to share issues and policies affecting refugees and asylum seekers and promote activities for fund raising, support and advocacy.

In late 2019, the decision was made to change from a weekly release to fortnightly. This has allowed the content to be better focused and themed – as well as giving Wendy a little more time to devote to the Buddies website.

< www.refugeebuddies.org/bulletins-current-year >



Facebook

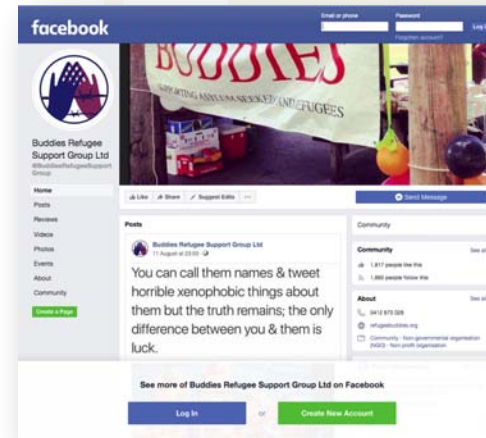
Anneliese Broadaway has continued this year as Administrator of our Facebook page, and we thank Anna for her ongoing involvement in this form of Buddies' communication, despite her very busy life!

www.facebook.com/BuddiesRefugeeSupportGroup/

Web

Mike Law was our webmaster from mid-2018. In April 2020, Wendy resumed her role as webmaster. Buddies thanks Mike for his IT expertise in maintaining and updating our web page.

www.refugeebuddies.org



Festuri 2019

The Festuri Multicultural Music Festival was held on the 19th September 2019 in Cotton Tree Park. It was once again a lively event with dancers from Brazil to the Cook Islands, stall holders from Sudan and human rights activists from Camaroon, to name just a few of the cultures represented. The Sunshine Coast Refugee Action Network had a stall with volunteers from Amnesty and Buddies.

There was an activity for young (and the young at heart) to make posters with messages of support for the Tamil family from Biloela, still in detention on



Christmas Island. This gave volunteers time to chat to parents about refugee issues while their children worked on their poster. It is surprising how little awareness of refugee issues there is in the general community and how sympathetic most people are.

The day provided an opportunity to increase community education and knowledge of the approach being taken by Australia's politicians and 'rule-makers', and its very real impacts on those seeking asylum on our shores. It also allowed us to demonstrate an appreciation of the culturally diverse communities on the Sunshine Coast and their contribution to community life.

There were 25 signatures on the Community Support Program petition, 24 on the 'I Choose Humane' petition, 11 on the Refugee Welcome Zone, 2 new Amnesty members and several Bulletin signups. In addition, donations were collected to sponsor a young Iranian refugee to Canada and \$100 (\$90 Canadian) has been sent on behalf of SCRAN. Thanks to all the volunteers who helped on the day,

(Thanks to Gillian Duffy for the majority of this report.)



Community engagement through film

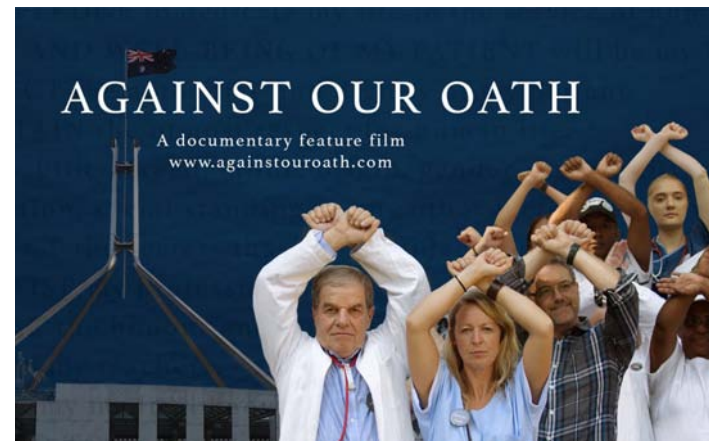
‘Against Our Oath’

“Ethical conflicts erupt for doctors as the Australian government overrides their clinical decisions made for refugee patients. If doctors cannot follow their medical ethics what will happen to their patients? Herein lies the extraordinary conflict of medical ethics versus politics that is playing out for doctors in Australia today.”

– ‘Against our oath’ website (www.againstouroath.com/)

In October 2019, the Sunshine Coast Refugee Action Network hosted the Queensland premiere of the documentary film ‘Against Our Oath’ by award-winning film maker Heather Kirkpatrick. This was followed by a Q&A with the Director.

The film was screened a second time two days later – once again with Heather Kirkpatrick speaking and responding



to audience questions. The film screening at the Majestic Cinema Nambour was a great success, with 113 people attending. Comments afterwards from audience members proved the film was considered both thought provoking and confronting.

Buddies used the opportunity to run a stall in the foyer for education and advocacy purposes. The event was also an opportunity to raise funds and \$630 was raised from the raffle, food and donations. From the two screenings, \$1,825 was raised towards sponsoring refugees from Manus or Nauru to resettle in Canada.

Thanks go to Gillian Duffy, Gaby Sutherland and Lynne Johnston for helping to co-ordinate this event. Catering was also provided by Mo Darbas – thank you for the delicious nibbles.



fundraising

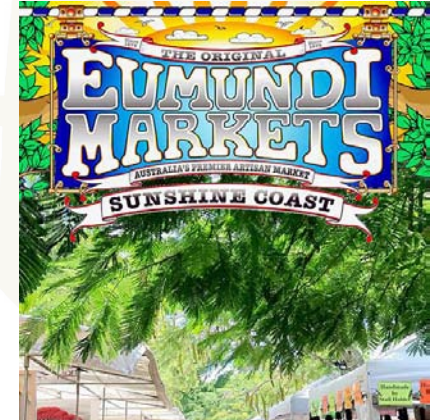
- Eumundi Markets car parking
- Containers for Change • Fruit sales
- Goodwill Wine • Sausage sizzles
- Donations



Eumundi Markets car parking

Buddies has maintained our agreement with Eumundi Markets to manage their car park on the first Wednesday and the first Saturday of every month. This brought in \$5,049 in the last financial year – even with the ongoing restrictions.

Firstly thanks go to Kendall Snowden and Yokki Rother for setting Buddies up in this program and continuing thanks to Penny Rivlin and Dee Williams for becoming our rostering team, organising our volunteers who serve in all weather conditions, sometimes during very busy holiday times, staffing the gate and directing traffic!



Containers for Change

Buddies has established itself as a recipient in the State Government's new container deposit scheme. Use our program number 'C10181760' when you deposit eligible containers and 10¢ for each will be credited directly to our bank account! This was a new initiative, and in 2019/2020 Buddies raised \$286.



Fruit sales

As has been the case for the last few years, between March and June 2020 a small but energetic group harvested the 'reachable' avocados on former Director Scott Grimmett's property.

After 13 consecutive Sunday mornings, the final collection was made on the 14th of June, 2020. Using an extension ladder perched precariously on rocks with an extension picker needing both hands may not be everybody's 'cup of tea', but thanks to the volunteers' sensational skills and courage the season was yet again a great success.

Special thanks to Kendall Snowden, Thene Bell and Yokki Rother for their indomitable spirit, as well as the three fellow Oriana Choir members – Lyndel Grant, Jackie Hooke and Mark Godfrey – who gave us valuable assistance throughout this trying time.

Scott Grimmett's most generous donation of both avocados and custard apples enabled them to work through COVID-19 despite all the restrictions and continue to do some fundraising for Buddies when other avenues were shut down. Grand total for 2020 was an all-time record – \$3,685.



Goodwill Wines

Buddies has renewed our agreement with Goodwill Wines whereby Buddies receives \$2 from every bottle purchased by our supporters through their website. This raised \$428 in the year.

<https://goodwillwine.com.au/charities/buddies-refugee-support-group>

Sausage sizzles

As has been the case for most volunteer organisations, COVID-19 has severely limited the events and fundraising Buddies could conduct in the 2020 period. However, over the financial year Buddies and Noosa Welcomes Refugees ran enough sausage sizzles to raise \$1,529 for Buddies' support projects! Special thanks to all participants, especially Dee Williams and Penny Rivlin for organising.

Donations

Buddies continues to benefit from regular cash donations from many supporters.

In 2020, due to the strict COVID-19 restrictions, Buddies began to step up promotion of monthly donations, in lieu of the donations we were previously receiving at monthly meetings. By June 2020, Buddies had received \$2,300 from regular monthly donations, and \$2,800 from one off donations.



hospitality



One Learn English Holiday program was run in September 2019. Due to COVID-19 restrictions however, Buddies was unable to run the usual second LEH in 2020.



Learn English Holiday (LEH)

One LEH program was run in 2019 – on the 23-27 September. This program involved the largest number of participants we have yet hosted – 52 people from 10 different countries (Rwanda, Iraq, Afghanistan, Burundi, Syria, Tibet, Myanmar, Eritrea, Ethiopia, and the Democratic Republic of the Congo). Their length of time in Australia ranged from one month to 30 months, and their English language levels ranged from absolute beginner to advanced.

The program was held at Immanuel Lutheran College who generously provided us with several classrooms and use of their facilities, and photocopied our learning materials. The Immanuel Worship Centre also provided us with wonderful facilities – the large open area where we held several activities, including the Multicultural Dinner – and every morning ate a delicious morning tea prepared and served by volunteers from the Church. One of our other partner schools donated their bus for our use in transporting our guests to and from the Sunshine Coast and from the beach to Wildlife HQ.



On this occasion, in addition to 31 adults we hosted a large cohort of young people (six 6-10 year olds; six 12-15 year olds; nine 16-19 year olds). This required us to develop separate learning and fun activities for these groups, and we were grateful for the volunteers who stepped into leadership positions in these groups. These volunteers were amongst a total of 55 involved in the classroom, including 14 senior students from Immanuel College, several volunteers who had taken part in previous LEHs, and others who answered our call for assistance.

Additionally, Dr Jo Loth and five of her University of the Sunshine Coast drama students again helped us graphically illustrate some of Australia's cultural idiosyncrasies. We are very grateful to all those who contributed so much to the experiences of our refugee guests. We particularly express our gratitude to the 20 homestay hosts who opened their homes to our guests, providing them with food, insights into Australian family life, and entertainment.

Unfortunately, once again due to the COVID-19 restrictions as well the timing of Easter, Buddies was unable to run a second LEH in April 2020.

Buddies sincere thanks goes to the (almost literally) tireless organisers of this flagship event - Mel Bacon, Kayla Szumer, Robin Dobson, Lesley Willcoxson, Margaret Norris, Margaret Cameron, Ana Perez – as well as the other people and organisations who made the September LEH possible.



service providers we support

In addition to the direct support we provide to refugees and people seeking asylum we also work indirectly through other organisations that identify and provide for those most in need.



Romero Centre

Since 2017 Buddies has been working with the Romero Centre in Brisbane. The Romero Centre provides and connects asylum seekers living in Brisbane with practical support (like food and shelter), legal connections, English classes, medical care, trauma counselling, community events and more.

During the recent COVID-19 restrictions, the needs of refugees have been ever more prevalent. In 2019/2020, Buddies has continued collecting non-perishable food and toiletries for refugees and asylum seekers. We have two 'drop-off' points, with plans underway to introduce a third strategic location for an additional drop-off point for volunteers living in the south west of the Sunshine Coast.



Two letters of appreciation from Romero

Hallo Amazing Federal, Warwick, Uki,
Pottsville, Redlands, Ballina and Sunshine
Coast,

There is no doubt that the Romero Centre has been extremely privileged and lucky to be a part of your inspiring ideas, projects and attitude of inclusion towards people seeking asylum. We humbly consider ourselves to be a part of your groups and community. We are full of gratitude and awe for your creativity, perseverance and compassion towards people seeking asylum and towards us at the Romero Centre. We have called upon you on so many occasions with panic, worries or frustration and you always have been there for us as our best friends, family, counsellors and supporters. Truly, you have no idea of how much you are appreciated on the Romero side.

Beata Ostapiej-Piatkowski
Romero Centre Manager

March 2020

Dear Scott (Grimmett),

Please pass on our sincere gratitude to all of Buddies' members for their ongoing support!

We also want to say big thanks to you for being the bridge to connect us with Buddies! For the period from the beginning of April to now, we have distributed over 150 emergency food/toiletry parcels to families and individuals. We cannot do this without your support!!!

Big thank you from Romero Centre team!

Many thanks

Sarah Pan
Romero

May 2020

Communify

Communify Queensland is a community organisation located in Bardon, Brisbane which provides a diverse range of services to a diverse range of people, including people seeking asylum and refugees.

In 2019/2020, Buddies donated a total of \$2,250 to Communify towards food, accommodation and education for a number of Communify clients.



Letter of appreciation from Communify

Dear Buddies

Communify Asylum Circle is most grateful for the recent contribution from the Buddies Refugee Support Group to assist the residents of the Bardon transitional accommodation (for people seeking asylum who have visa restrictions and have become homeless).

At the beginning of April the tiny incomes some of our clients were receiving in their part time cleaning jobs evaporated. This has meant a heavier reliance on donations. Six (P, M, V, K, F K) of the 8 residents who had employment (in the 18 unit accommodation) have lost their jobs. We are relieved to receive donations like yours so we can provide emergency food vouchers to these residents who unexpected lost their income.

As you are aware the new pandemic environment has presented many challenges for people seeking asylum. The news about the impact of the coronavirus in Iran has been very distressing for the Persian residents. Many of them are fearful about their parent's safety.

We are lucky Communify has recognised that Theo Carney (my colleague) and I are considered essential service workers so we can come to the transitional accommodation office each day and provide emergency financial support, referrals to medical and dental services and keep in contact with residents who have been feeling isolated.

Thank you again for your ongoing support.

Regards

Mandy Cox, Multicultural Programs

May 2020



www.communify.org.au

Letter of appreciation from Multicultural Australia

Dear Paul (McKinlay) and Gillian (Duffy),

I also wanted to take this opportunity to express our gratitude to the Buddies group for your support to the refugees and asylum seekers in South East Queensland. It is with your generous donations to Multicultural Australia, that we have been able to provide assistance to those who needed it the most. You may particularly recall the two extreme cases of solo female parent families for whom we were able to provide direct support and prevent homelessness.

I would also like to acknowledge all the other great work that you do in changing the conversation about refugees and asylum seekers in the community.

Please accept this email as our utmost appreciation of your support and we look forward to working with you again soon.

With gratitude,

Tim Draper
A/ Chief Executive Officer

November 2019



**MULTICULTURAL
AUSTRALIA**
it's who we are

Asylum Seeker Resource Centre (ASRC)

The ASRC is a national human rights organisation providing food, legal aid, education, employment advice, support and healthcare for refugees and seekers of asylum. In 2019/2020, Buddies donated \$500 to ASRC for their ongoing support of seekers of asylum across Australia.



Indooroopilly Uniting Church Refugee Support Service

In 2019/2020, Buddies became aware of this group in Brisbane who provide practical support to needy asylum seekers and refugees – vulnerable people fleeing persecution and seeking Australia's protection.

Their current focus is helping asylum seekers and refugees complete complex immigration paperwork, providing access to volunteers and pro-bono lawyers. The Service also provides some supplementary food and encourages people to participate in weekday activities of the church as a way to integrate into the community.

Throughout the year, Buddies has maintained their professional and personal relationship with this group, and donated \$2,550 to their causes.



membership finance statement of accounts



Membership

In the 2019/2020 financial year the Company membership fee was unchanged at \$10 per year. The membership year is 1 July to 30 June.

In 2019/2020 the Company had 104 members, a decrease from 129 members in the 2018-19 financial year.

Finance

Our Finance Committee consists of James Fowler, Penny Rivlin, Dee Williams and Tricia Reade. We are extremely blessed to have a passionate and knowledgeable team guiding Buddies' financial future.



Summary Statement of Accounts

1 July 2019 – 30 June 2020

INCOME		
Membership fees	\$ 1,040	6%
Donations	\$ 5,331	29%
Fund Raising	\$ 11,459	62%
Other – SCRAN raffle ticket sales	\$ 785	4%
TOTAL INCOME	\$ 18,614	100%
EXPENDITURE		
Operating Costs	\$ 1,938	9%
Community Awareness	\$ 522	3%
Fund Raising Costs	\$ 0	0%
Direct Support for People Seeking Asylum & Refugees	\$ 5,302	26%
Donations to refugee support & advocacy groups	\$ 12,104	59%
Other - SCRAN raffle ticket - transferred to NWR	\$ 795	4%
TOTAL EXPENDITURE	\$ 20,661	100%
CASH AT BANK		
As at 1 July 2019	\$ 8,288.64	
As at 30 June 2020	\$ 6,241.69	
Less June accruals	\$ 2,747.00	
Funds available for disbursement	\$ 3,494.69	



our supporters & partners

Buddies is grateful for the support of
the following groups:



- Amnesty International (Maroochydore)
- Asylum Seeker Resource Centre
- Berkelouw Books & Cafe, Eumundi
- Bunnings Warehouse
- Communify
- Digitech, Buderim
- Eumundi Markets
- Event Cinemas, Noosa Heads
- Festuri
- Fisheries on the Spit
- Goodwill Wines
- Immanuel Lutheran College, Buderim
- Majestic Cinema, Nambour
- Matthew Flinders Anglican College, Buderim
- Multicultural Australia
- Nambour Community Centre
- Noosa Council
- Noosa Welcomes Refugees
- Romero Multicultural Hub
- St John's College, Nambour
- Sunshine Coast Refugee Action Network
- Sunshine Coast Regional Council
- University of the Sunshine Coast
- Welcome to Maleny
- Wildlife HQ



BUDDIES REFUGEE SUPPORT GROUP

AUGUST 2020

This report compiled by Paul McKinlay
Layout by Wendy Oakley

