

**The Blue Mountains Support Group (BMRSB) is a project of Blue
Mountains Family Support Service Inc.
Annual Report 2009-10**

The past year has been a disappointing one politically. The influx of refugees arriving by boat has fueled the unfounded fears within the community of terrorism.

Christmas Island is now full and detention centres on the mainland have had to be reopened. This does not necessarily mean that the asylum seekers in these detention centres are being mistreated, However, the length of time refugees remain in detention has been a problem in the past and looms as a problem for the present and the future.

The policies of both of the major parties have done nothing to improve the position. As our support base had decreased we have had to renew our efforts to bring these matters to the attention of the general public, and the politicians.

Mr Cyril O'Connor, the CEO of The House of Welcome addressed our meeting and he indicated that providing respite holiday weekends for some of their people was the best way we could help them. This we have been able to do.

Direct Action

- We wrote letters of protest to Senator Evans and Hon Bob Debus concerning the interruption in the processing of asylum seekers from Afghanistan and Sri Lanka.
- As the election approached we wrote letters to all the local candidates stressing our concerns concerning:

Delays in processing refugees' claims

Mandatory detention

Contracting out of services to private enterprise.

Conditions for families and children in detention.

Release of detainees without adequate immediate assistance .

Difficulties faced by refugees, who have been deported or have returned home.

Access to education post school.

Greater access to English classes.

Review of resettlement procedures.

Review of work rights for Bridging holders.

The urgent need for the Government to prepare for future climate change refugees from the Pacific.

Regretably these are the same as in the past year.

Direct Help

- We have continued to support the House of Welcome, Bridges for Asylum Seekers and the Asylum Seekers Centre financially.

As our funds were becoming very low we have planned a Bush Dance to raise money so we can continue to give these organization financial support.

- Our dedicated band of visitors has continued to visit Villawood Detention Centre and to provide friendship and some needed extras to the detainees. We were encouraged early in 2010 by a more relaxed atmosphere at Villawood but as the number of detainees increased up to June some of the old problems associated with overcrowding have resurfaced.

We are disappointed that day release of detainees into our care has been cancelled.

- It was with regret that we had to cancel the Christmas Picnic for the people from the House of Welcome due to lack of funds to pay for the transport.

The future for asylum seekers, and refugees is not encouraging. We shall continue to bring their needs to the attention of our elected parliamentarians and the members of the public in the best way we can.

I must thank all the members of the Committee for their hard work and support.

We sincerely thank the Blue Mountains Family Support Service for its continued support and encouragement.

Marie Standen

Chairperson

September, 2010
