

# Blue Mountains Refugee Support Group Newsletter May, 2016

A Project of Mountains Support Inc.

PO Box 197 Katoomba 2780 ph.4782 7866 [www.bmrsg.org.au](http://www.bmrsg.org.au)



## **Palm Sunday Rally**

A large crowd gathered on the lawn outside the 'Hub' in Springwood on Palm Sunday to hear addresses by Paul Power CEO, Refugee Council of Australia and Rev. Bill Crews the founder of the Exodus Foundation.

Paul Power emphasized the gravity of the present situation and the need for Australia to accept its responsibilities under the Refugee Convention. He expanded on four areas, which he believed should be our immediate priorities:

1. We need to push for an urgent review of the situation of people in long-term detention in Australia. At a recent count there were 1753, of which 65 were children, locked in detention.
2. Offshore processing is unsustainable and cruel. It must end.
3. We need to put an end to detention of children once and for all. In March this year of the 115 children who were detained in Australia and Nauru, most have been there for more than two years.
4. The 'fast track' asylum system is complex and often unfair. Asylum seekers need independent legal advice to navigate their way through this process. There must be a right of review.

A full account of Paul's address can be found on our website or by contacting Marie Standing on 47 51 2120.

Bill Crews spoke passionately of his experiences when visiting refugee camps in Europe and Australia. He called for an immediate compassionate worldwide solution to this problem.

The delightful duo 'Snez' and singer Kathy Knight ably supported both speakers. A special thanks to the MC Ron Fuller and Mayor Cl. Mark Greenhill for their continued support.

## Visitors' and Committee Get together Lunch

The Beifus family opened their lovely home in Springwood for our Get-together Lunch on Sunday, 30 April. The Tamil cooks did us proud and the atmosphere was bright and cheerful. It was a lovely way for everyone to meet and the ideas and experiences flowed back and forth. The atmosphere was electric. Hearty thanks to Craig and Maureen Williams who organised the lunch. 'We must do this again.' was on everyone's lips as they left.

### Screening of film "Chasing Asylum" and Book Launch Mt. Vic Flick 19 June 2018 6.30 pm

Blue Mountains Refugee Support Group and Amnesty International are joining together to present a private screening of a new film called "Chasing Asylum". In this film, the award winning Australian film-maker Eva Orner has exposed Australia's treatment of asylum seekers. This is the film the Government does not want you to see!

A recent review in The Guardian calls it a "90 minute compendium of shame" – It describes the film as 'vital and gut wrenching'.

We believe that everyone should see it and be informed as to what is happening on our doorstep with our tacit approval.

The film will be screened at the Mt Vic Flicks in Mount Victoria on Sunday, 19<sup>th</sup> June at 6.30pm.

We will also be launching a recently published book about asylum seekers. This book was written by James Roy and Noel Zihabamwe. James is a well-known Mountains children's author. The Book "One Thousand Hills" is a novel, based on the true story of Noel's life.

Noel was ten years old, living through the shocking events of the 1994 Rwandan genocide. He witnessed the massacre of family and friends and as an orphan, subsequently spent many years as an asylum seeker and refugee in Africa under appalling conditions. He came to Australia ten years ago – studied English and graduated with a degree in Community Welfare, which is where he works today.

Tickets for this event are \$20 and can be obtained at Megalong Books, Leura – Gleebooks, Blackheath – The Turning Page, Springwood or online at [www.bmrsg.org.au](http://www.bmrsg.org.au) For information: Maureen 4784271



# Social Media Report from Pat Rayner

## Facebook

Followers 2210, 46 new people followed us this week.

These people mostly live in Australia, about 50% in Sydney and about 50% in the Blue Mountains. The majority of the followers are in the 35 – 45 age group.

We have had a great response to our posts on the rallies #Let Them Stay last Thursday and also for the vigil at Leura Uniting Church. Many mountains' groups including Blackheath Area Neighbourhood Centre and the Catholic Church at Blackheath have shared these posts on their Facebook page.

Noeline Nagle requested an appeal for a baby capsule for a new baby due in a few weeks. There were a number of offers from as far away as Bondi and Hunters Hill. She has a followers capsule ready for the baby.

Julie Brackenrig and I sponsor some posts. This means Facebook will extend the reach of the post for a sum, I typically pay \$7 and we can target the group who we want to reach. One such sponsored post was for the baby capsule when we initially did not get any offers.

Grandmothers Against the Detention of Children Sydney frequently shares our posts on their pages. They also provide us with information of their events which we occasionally post on Facebook but I put in the Events section of the website

## Twitter

The Facebook posts automatically go on our Twitter feed. These are then retweeted by various people and groups, such as Refugee Action Coalition Sydney. I also put other items on Twitter and comment on relevant items.

We have 185 followers on Twitter, many are organisations such as RAC and ChilOut. There have been new posts since Christmas, about the activities of BMRSG and reports from media such as New Matilda and an article by Robert Manne published in The Monthly.

Interested folk can click on the Follow link at the bottom of the Home page and they will receive a notification by email when a new article is posted.

There were 278 different visits to the website in the month of January.

I promote the activities of refugee advocacy groups that are on around Sydney as not all groups have such a page and we have Sydney followers.

## Pictures of children

We are particularly sensitive and cautious about the use of pictures of children on the website and Facebook. I suggest we use the guidelines published by the Australian Government <https://aifs.gov.au/cfca/publications/images-children-and-young-people-online>

I suggest that parents/guardians of children sign a release if their child's picture is likely to be used. Brendan can fill you in on this.

Both Facebook and the website are only successful because some members are very good at keeping us informed, sending us information and writing stories of local activities. I encourage more to do this and send to [patarayner@inet.net.au](mailto:patarayner@inet.net.au) .

Note: If you have email please send a message yo [bmrag@aapt.net.au](mailto:bmrag@aapt.net.au) .

*Editor Marie Standen*

