



Proverbs 29:7 "The righteous care about justice for the poor,  
but the wicked have no such concern."

Dear church and community supporters,

Apologies to those not on Facebook who have not been kept up to date wrt our initiative's progress. This letter will fill in any gaps and lead us forward together.

### **Syrian refugee settlement in N Beaches:**

In recent months we have had 3 refugee arrivals to the northern beaches & it appears that the immigration process is speeding up as people are being processed & granted visas. So far our 3 arrivals comprise: a family of 4, 2 girls aged 7&10yrs to a 2 bedroom granny flat; a single person is in a house & about to have 2 more family members join her with another 2 expected in a few weeks; our 3rd is a family of 4, 2 boys aged 10&15 yrs staying with extended family in Belrose & we are looking for accommodation for them.

All of the families from Syria who have come to this area so far are Armenians with a Christian heritage, & each of them are linked/sponsored by their extended family already living in the northern beaches/Forest area. In future we can expect some unlinked refugees & some of Muslim heritage but it seems that the Armenian Syrians are likely to continue in the short term at least. Having family living locally is a great help in them getting settled & their families are able to motivate them with their language learning, finding work, find accommodation, pick up some of the cost etc. Settlement Services International (SSI) are involved in helping the refugees sort out banking, Centrelink, English classes. SSI sign the lease as the head lessee & provide weekly visits from an appointed case worker.

### **Rental process:**

- For those being housed in granny flats, SSI sign the lease with the owner & a proportion of their Centrelink payments cover the below market rent. We are not currently subsidising such arrangements. Our remaining granny flats are all 1 bedroom, limiting occupancy to 1-2 people.
- For those needing to rent through R/E agents we are looking to provide \$250/wk for a family of 4 over a 12 month period to bridge the gap between market rent & their Centrelink payment. During this time we hope that most of the refugees will make significant progress in language & that at least 1 member of the family will be able to find work to enable them to take up the rental gap after the 12 months. As our remaining granny flats are all 1 bedroom, & since most of the refugees are in family units, we are working with local R/E agents to rent 2 b'room apartments/units.

Some churches & individuals have pledged money to cover the rental gap for 12 months & we have a bank account set up to receive these funds & to distribute them through SSI. We are applying for DGR (tax deductible status) but this could take some time to sort out. We hope that those who pledged will deposit in this account so that we can respond to the needs as they arise.

Please deposit into this Commbank account:

*Refugee Initiative Northern Beaches Churches*  
BSB: 062155 Account: 10638723

Please ensure that you put your NAME, CHURCH NAME or GROUP, when you deposit. This will allow transparency of where monies are coming from & will allow us to give you a receipt should you need one. All pledges made will be used to help with rental subsidy for new arrivals.

Settlement Services International (SSI) will invoice us when a rental subsidy is due, & the relevant amount will be transferred to SSI.

The 3 signatures of this account are from our RINBC working group - myself, Jill McNaught & Stuart Fathers. Any money withdraws or transfers need the approval of 2 of the 3 signatories. The account will be audited annually by Sherley & Sherley Chartered Accountants, Manly.

## Transitioning refugees into our community:

Four main factors contribute towards refugees successfully assimilating into our community:

1. *Accommodation* - we are working on this through our granny flats and Real Estate agents
2. *Welcoming them* - we have visited families & C3 church provides a welcome pack with practical goodies. We hope that over the months ahead we will get to know these people & enfold them into our community & churches. See more below re. Welcome Dinners etc.
3. *English proficiency* - some church & community English classes can supplement the TAFE(510hrs) instruction that they receive.
4. *Finding work* - Our hope is that out of 40 churches & community support we can find work for these highly motivated people. So far we have 2 Syrian men
  - a silversmith whose work includes amazing ornate plates & crosier(head of staff)
  - a hydraulic pump mechanic.
  - one of the wives has found work in the family business, the other would like housekeeping work in the Elanora area.
    - *learning English is their main priority at present but any work opportunities, whether in their field or not, would be appreciated.*
  - another refugee looking for work is an Iranian man who came to follow Jesus through St Clements in Mosman. He has trained as a lawyer in Tehran & more recently at Sydney Uni: Master of Laws (LLM) 2007-08 & at UTS: Juris Doctor (JD) 2009-15. Currently Hooman is working as a case worker for refugees but would love any work in the field of law - CV available. He lives in Frenchs Forest with his wife & 2 daughters.... any solicitors in our churches would do well to employ Hooman, I will vouch for him.

## Coming events:

1) Supporters Meeting - Where church & community supporters can be updated & engage with presentations/training on cultural awareness with middle eastern people. **7pm 18 August at St Faiths Anglican Church, Narrabeen, 5-9 Clarke St Narrabeen.**

This will be run by myself with Pete Nelson & members of Crest Baptist Church (<http://www.crestbaptistchurch.org/>) Crest is a church with many Arabic people with Arabic & English services & they want to help us to better understand arabic people for us the be well prepared to relate respectfully & serve their needs.

2) Mentoring program: For those who have expressed interest in the mentoring program we will be in contact with you. Any others interested this is pretty intense and not for full-time workers.

3) Welcome Dinners - The Welcome Dinner Project are aiming to hold the first Welcome Dinner late Aug for all of our current new arrivals, and also some other new arrivals to the Northern Beaches, who are not part of our initiative. The Welcome Dinner project provide a facilitator & choose a number of other guests to attend, who will make the newcomers feel welcome. The first dinner will be hosted by Jill McNaught. If you are interested in knowing more about the Welcome Dinner Project, please visit the website at <https://www.joiningthedots.org/the-welcome-dinner-project> - stay tuned.

4) Further social events - Our intention is to run events such as BBQs & include refugees in church events that happen during the year. If you want to run such an event please talk it through with us.

Michael

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