

# Sanctuary Northern Rivers

## January 2008

### ***2007 Annual Report***

Finally I can attach the annual report for 2007. The president's report was tabled at the AGM in November, and after some delay, we have the auditor's report on the financial statements. The financial report provides the positive picture of our financial position, which will enable our capacity to expand to reach further refugee populations. Attached is a summary. A full copy of the report is available upon request.

### ***New Directions***

There was unanimous support for the constitutional changes mooted through the latter part of last year. Accordingly, Sanctuary Northern Rivers has broadened its brief. There are four key areas

- Sponsoring refugees to settle into our local community
- Advocacy for compassionate refugee policy and awareness of refugee concerns – both locally and nationally
- Support for refugee needs in countries of sanctuary. For the many refugee populations throughout the world, most do not have the opportunity for third country settlement. We will select specific populations and work with them to better their life in their current and future situations;
- Leadership and development program amongst the local youth of our community (for example, school education program, immersion visits)

### ***New management arrangements***

The constitutional changes agreed to at the AGM heralds a new governance body – a Board of Management that replaces the previous committee. The new Board includes:

Michael Douglas – President  
Denise Miller – Deputy President  
Leonie Allsopp – Secretary  
Shelley Honeychurch – Treasurer  
Paul Morretti

We are in the process of developing a strategic approach to fulfil our task – as this starts to come together we will seek your input. There will be a series of subcommittees to support the functions of Sanctuary – very likely to be along the lines of the four themes listed above. We will be looking for people to support these subcommittees shortly.

Administrative and communication processes need to be strengthened considerably – I hope that you will see the benefits of this by midyear.

It is very likely that we will recruit a paid employee at some time soon to assist with the expansion of our role. We are of the belief that our community is firmly behind support for refugee populations (there are

about 40 million in the world), and that with a little more effort, we can do a whole lot more than we have to now. The 'business case' for the position is still to be established. Our thinking is that it will be self funding through grants.

## ***Refugee Settlement***

There will be three families from **Sierra Leone** arriving in Lismore in late February – a total of 5 adults and their 11 children (aged 8 – 18 years). These will be the first Sierra Leoneans' to settle locally. Three of the adults are journalists, and each has fled their home country for fear of their life. We very much look forward to welcoming them here. We will need a lot of support – particularly in the first fortnight.

Although we are not sponsoring anywhere near the numbers of refugees that we tried to assist in gaining visas over the last year, we are still involved in achieving the reunion of several of the families already settled in Lismore. There are a few applications in the pipeline.

## ***Projects***

### **Burmese nursery school in Thailand**

The first of our 'off-shore' refugee projects will be support a small nursery school of infants of first generation Burmese refugees (Karen and Shan ethnic groups) currently living in the north west of Thailand (Mae Hong Son). These refugees are stateless – having been subject to persecution and living in constant fear in their own state, they have fled into Thailand, yet are not mandated as refugees



#### ***Letter from Ethnic Migrant Family School, Mae Hong Son (North West Thailand).***

“We are very happy that we received your kindness message. We made a meeting with our members, and read your message.

In front of them, everybody thank you and surprise and happy. They want to work with you and accept your kindness.

We have many projects to apply to write a proposal each project to you. Please pioneer us, lead us, arrange for us.

With best regard

by the UNHCR. The result is that they have no access to any of the food, health or educational needs. Subsequently, they labour on farms, or work in factories for very long hours most days. Their young children are frequently neglected in this setting. The initiative has been taken by a remarkable Burmese man to initiate services for these young children and for their parents. It is a very frugal operation – yet a bright light in the darkness of their lives. We are still in discussion as to how best we assist the needs. The first of these projects will likely be to build three buildings to accommodate children for boarding at the school. Other potential projects that we have been requested projects include employing a teacher to teach the adolescent aged children Thai, and a series of income generation activities (vegetable garden, pig breeding, fish pound).

We are currently detailing the amounts of funds required for these projects, and will expend every effort to give these children a hand. We will profile these projects as they are further fleshed out and progressed.

### **Social justice/fair trade cafe**

We are in early discussion with the Uniting Church about a possible partnership in establishing a fair trade cafe. This provides numerous opportunities – advocacy, shopfront, a meeting and discussion place, training and employment, enterprise/fundraising. Very exciting – but still in early gestation.

## ***Events***

### **Community BBQ**

Glennis Garrity has again kindly opened her home and property to all settled refugees and supports for our third annual BBQ. A great chance to meet your peers and share ideas in a casual setting.

Date:	Sunday 27 January at 2.00 pm
Address:	864 Fernleigh Road Brooklet. If it is raining – we will postpone.

Please call me if you need directions. **We do need support in assisting with transport from Lismore** – if you can help, please let us know.

### ***Refugee Week 2008 – June 15 – June 21***

Our annual dinner will be held at the same time (mid – late June). We are still bedding down details of guest speaker and venue – Information to follow shortly.

### ***Support needs***

There are some pressing needs where we could do with some more hands. If you can help, please let me know immediately:

- **Settlement support for the three new Sierra Leone families** (late February through March)
- **Assisting with visa applications** – being the link between refugees in their respective ‘camps’ and the Department of Immigration and Citizenship. It is toiling with the bureaucratic end, yet brings you into the direct cries of the refugees in their seeking a solution to their difficulties.
- **Transporting furniture** – a one off need for anyone nearby Lismore with a truck or trailer .
- **Help to transport refugee families to BBQ 27 January** – we need about 4 – 5 vehicles/drivers. Please let me know ASAP.
- **Driving lessons** - each learner driver needs to gain 120 hours of driving lessons before undertaking drivers test – anyone willing to assist is appreciated.
- **Homework support** – with school starting back shortly, we would like to continue to assist some of the younger children with their understanding of their school work. We have recently been provided a grant for a laptop to assist with this program. Any helpers are welcome.

Thank you for all your interest and support.

***Michael Douglas,***

***President 15 September 2008***