

FEBRUARY 2023

Kia Ora,

We trust you are all keeping well and have settled into the new year. We hope no one has been adversely affected by the recent unusual weather and the cyclone that hit the North Island. Please let us know if any of your community members have been affected.

Most of you may be aware of some changes in the operations of the **Waikato Refugee Forum** and certain decisions which have been made to the running of the organisation.

Chairperson Nora Arango has been confirmed as WRF Chairperson. She assumed the role of acting Chairperson from Hassan Beigi, who stepped down in November, due to work and family commitments. She is chairperson of the Colombian Community Trust in Hamilton and was the WRF vice-chairperson in 2022.

A new vice-chairperson is still to be elected.

New Board Members WRF is looking at reconstituting the Board to include people outside of the Forum, who have a background of working with former refugees, immigrants and related agencies and organisations. As per best practice, the Board should include a designated Secretary and a Treasurer. WRF would be appointing suitable persons to fill these positions. The following persons have been invited to join the WRF board:

- **Liaquat Changezi** – ROC Director
- **Paul Kumbuka** – Settlement Navigator, HMST
- **Edward Park** – International Marketing Director, WINTEC

New Financial Director We would also like to introduce **Kaveri Nair**, the new Financial Director. She takes over from the former Treasurer, **Anisa Osman**, who has resigned from the role due to her increased work schedule.

New Email WRF has a new email address for the office, admin@wrf.org.nz All correspondence should now be sent to this email address. The following email addresses have also been created for the management executive:

- chairperson@wrf.org.nz
- finance@wrf.org.nz
- advisor@wrf.org.nz
- For Afghan Evacuee project Jo can still be contacted on w.refugeeforum@xtra.co.nz

The old email will continue to be in use until our contacts become familiar with the new ones.

Other Staff Changes Jo de Lisle, Coordinator and Afghan Evacuee Project Navigator is also reducing her office hours and coordinating duties starting from February. Her WRF coordinating duties will be split between Augusta and Kaveri. Jo will still be coordinating the Afghan Evacuee project with Ali Reza and offering JP services on Thursdays and other days of the week (except Wednesdays) by appointment.

Community News

In the following months, we will be contacting our forum members for an update on their activities, to share with the WRF community. It will be good to know what each group is doing so we can support each other.

The Afar community is in the process of registering their group as an incorporated society. We would like to add, for communities which have not registered as a Trust or Incorporated Society, it's time to do so now. There are benefits and advantages:

- Having a formal group structure helps to strengthen the group.
- Having formal registration makes it possible for the group to apply for funding from registered funders such as Trust Waikato, Lotteries Grants Board, WEL Energy Trust, Hamilton City Council, DV Bryant etc.

WRF will be happy to help any community to learn more and help with applications. Please reach out to us at the office.

World Refugee Day

The celebrated of this event in Hamilton is funded by WRF with collaboration from other agencies. WRF will be hosting planning meetings to start the planning process for the event. Invitations for a meeting will go out before the end of the month.

In the meantime, Forum members can start discussing with their communities what activities they would like to participate in on the day, including the food fair. St Paul's Collegiate school hosted the event last year for no charge and have indicated that they would very much like to host it again.

Afghan Evacuee Project

This project started in 2021 funded by Immigration NZ to support the Afghanis who had visa applications in progress when the Taliban took over Afghanistan in August 2021. Hassan Beigi, former Chairperson of WRF led this project in Hamilton. The project is currently staffed by Jo de Lisle and Ali Reza Mirzad, with social work support for any high and complex needs cases referred to Shama Ethnic Women's Centre social workers.

Many of the evacuees have family support already in Hamilton and speak English. There is a core group of about 10 families who have no family connects in Hamilton and are just beginning to learn English. They have required intense support and now it is exciting to see them gaining independence.

We would like to acknowledge the wonderful support this project has received from Hamilton's Rotary clubs who helped set up houses for the families and assisted with necessities such as school uniforms, blankets, technology etc. Fairfield Rotary also funded a wonderful welcome dinner for all the Afghan evacuees in Hamilton last winter. Waikato Refugee Forum funded welcome packs for the new families which were gratefully received. The project is expected to complete at the end of May 2023.

There is a scheduled online stakeholders meeting on Wednesday, 22nd February to talk about Refugee Family Support Category (Tier 1&2). This is a follow on from a meeting that was held last year to address questions and give information regarding changes to Tier 1&2. We will update you with relevant information after the meeting.