



Spring Newsletter November 2014

ERCRC is a ministry of the Christian Brothers that provides free learning support, tuition and a range of recreational services to students of a disadvantaged or refugee background in the Brimbank area of Melbourne.

Learning Programs



Director's update

by Br. Frank Perkins

As the last few weeks of the school academic year draw to a close, it is always a valuable exercise for us to reflect on how well we have been open and responsive to the real needs of the young people who seek our support. Each one of these young people brings his or her own wishes and dreams for the future, and a major imperative for us (and privilege) is to walk a short distance with each person on this journey. We remain hugely indebted to our wonderful band of volunteer tutors who bring with them boundless energy, optimism and encouragement.

The success of each session in terms of learning productivity is largely based on providing a sufficient number of volunteer tutors, whose skills and generous commitment of time and energy are integral to the programme. Many of the adult tutors have had experience in the education field, a significant number are current tertiary students, while others are active members of community groups that have a social outreach component. Many of these people bring with them either specialised subject and curriculum knowledge, or a wide range of professional and practical competencies which all add to the rich texture of the tutor/learner relationship. They are all valued members of our ERCRC team. We are also very grateful for the wonderful support we receive from several secondary schools that have provided senior students to act as tutors for the primary school Homework Help sessions. These senior students have acted as mentors and role models to the primary school children they tutored, forming positive and caring relationships that help provide educational progress in its widest sense.

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Swimming Lessons sponsored by LSV

by Frank Perkins

ERCRS was approached by Life Saving Victoria (LSV) towards the end of the first term of school, to nominate students who would benefit from an intensive program of swimming lessons during the first term school holidays. This generous offer on the part of LSV was quickly accepted, and during the holidays the children took the opportunity to receive quality lessons from the Austswim qualified instructors at the Sunshine Leisure Centre. The results were im-

pressive: Week One - 131 free lessons received by 31 children, Week Two - 89 free lessons received by 29 children. The feedback to the ERCRS staff from families was very positive with reports of children gaining confidence in the water, and improving their water safety skills.

The positive feedback resulted in LSV offering sponsored lessons again during the second term school holidays. The sessions were again well supported by the children and their families: Week One - 114 free lessons received by 27 children, Week Two - 71 free lessons received by 21 children.

ERCRS is very grateful for the support and encouragement received from LSV towards improving the water safety knowledge and swimming skills of children from the CALD communities.



Women's Night

by Suzan

During the July holidays, African women gathered to celebrate together. At first I didn't enjoy the celebration because the participants were a bit late.

I was overjoyed by the guest speakers (Sara Maher & Pauline Meemeduma) who spoke well and taught me useful, understandable information. Pauline gave us amazing information about our children which really touched my heart.

I wish that all mothers who have children in the Homework Club could attend such events in the



future. This program can help develop our understanding about new ways of parenting in Australian society.

I want to thank Brother Frank and all staff of ERCRS who organised the event, all speakers who taught us memorable advice, Asunta & Natalia who came up with the idea and all the women who participated in the evening by preparing delicious food and showcasing their cultural heritage. I also thank Rosanna, Rejoice and Gloria who helped at the door and finally, I thank the DJ who did a great job of entertaining everyone.

Child Protection and Reporting Training

by Biong Biong

In May this year, ERCRS benefited from the new Edmund Rice Ocean Province's Child Protection Training rollout, by holding its first Child Protection training, delivered by Dr. Pauline Meemeduma. 80% of tutors managed to do the Foundational Training during this time and their feedback was great. The training seem to have challenged many people's assumptions of knowing it all, in other words, many described it as a must-do training whether you are a doctor, teacher, lawyer etc. The training brings many benefits to people in all careers and in their personal lives in how they relate to children. In brief, this training covers areas such as: Children's Care Needs, Child Maltreatment, Child Protection Assessment, Observing, Reporting, and Decision-making

For me as one of the participates, I would say that I was fully satisfied with the contents of the training and the level of professionalism brought in by Pauline. As a father who is working with children, I am quite aware that meeting children care needs in everyway possible is vital. However, it is not easy to do, especially when dealing with young people who are still being haunted by their past experiences. Professional ways in how to handle their needs and concerns is extremely important, and this training provided exactly that.

We are now confident that our tutors know how to identify children's care needs, child maltreatment, how to assess breaches in children's care needs, and how to report any concerns.

The next step up after Foundational training was Reporting Officer training. This training helps train people whose responsibility is to gather and forward issues of concern to a qualified social worker who has the professional capability to take them further. Each of our learning sessions and program activities is supervised by at least one Reporting Officer.



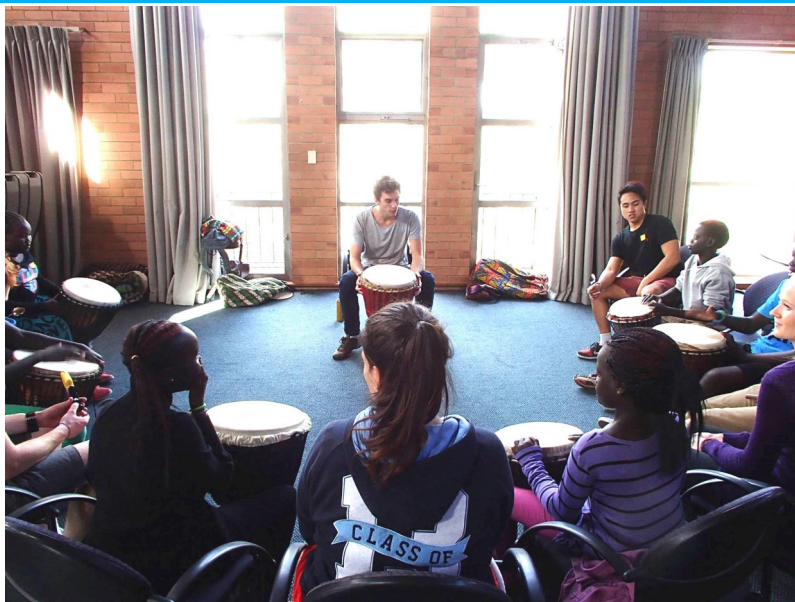
Staff Lunch



ERCRS Annual Staff Lunch will never go unnoticed, not because of its size but for the intimacy and sense of togetherness it brings. The ERCRS staff is a small team but it feels much larger because of the sense of teamwork.

During this lunch however, we had the opportunity to farewell Dane and Br. Richard and at the same time to welcome Br. Trevor and Biong.

It was a day of reflection, celebration, encouragement and above all laughter.



Easter Kids Camp

During Easter School holiday between 18th and 21st April, ERCRS sent 21 children on a camp run by Edmund Rice Camps Victoria. All the children who attended the camp were from the St. Albans sessions with many being from Year Six, since it is their last year at Homework Club.

These camps are very important for children from our services who have fewer opportunities to engage in fun activities during school holiday.

After each camp, the results are visible to many of us who work with the children at Homework Centre. Children give their own account of their experience on the camp like the following :

"I had a great time with my Camp leader.

She was very kind, funny, loved singing and never yelled, because she is loving and is always looking out for everyone. I enjoyed the whole camp because I learnt new songs and chants. I enjoyed playing the cup song in the talent show with all my friends".

Many children improved in their self-esteem and confidence. Our thanks to the Edmund Rice Camps' team for providing great activities and to the capable young leaders who mentored the children through each activity.

ERCRS is very grateful to the Edmund Rice Foundation for providing funds needed to sponsor our children on this camp.



Visit by Brothers from East Africa

by Frank Perkins

On Monday 18th August, ERCRS St. Albans welcomed Br. George Massay and Br. Fredrick Otieno to our afterschool Homework & Learning Support session at the Errington Centre.

This was a chance for the two visiting Brothers to view what we are trying to achieve with the primary school students who access our program. Both Brothers joined in with the session, and also addressed the students and the tutors. With the majority of the primary school students being Sudanese, it was great for them to hear about what the Brothers were doing in Africa, and especially from Fredrick who is working in Yambio, South Sudan.



New Homework Session at Sunshine Harvester School



Following a very successful year at Sunshine Harvester Primary School, ERCRS in partnership with Centre for Multicultural Youth (CMY) has opened a new Learning Support session at Sunshine Harvester. The reason for the new session is to provide for other children who couldn't get a space at the Thursday homework session and who are very much in need of help.

This new learning support session runs every Wednesday from 3.30pm to 5pm at Sunshine Harvester Primary. All the children who attend must be from Sunshine Harvester School and are approved by the EAL coordinator.

The Thursday session which was initiated last year, has been very successful. In-class performances for students who are attending this session, has improved according to feedback from the principal, teachers and parents.

Both Wednesday and Thursday Sessions are currently coordinated by our amazing new team member, Elizabeth Diacos (see below) who joined our team in term three this year.

New Staff Member

Hi everyone,

My name is Elizabeth Diacos and I'm very excited to come on board as the Assistant Coordinator of the Edmund Rice Refugee Education Support Program, alongside Frank Perkins and the indomitable Chris Durbridge, the EAL Coordinator at Sunshine Harvester School.

It's been great to see that the Wednesday afternoon program has gotten off to such a strong start. Thanks to Chris for getting this underway until I was able to take up my position.

I look forward to getting to know the school community over the next few weeks and months, so if you see me around, please say "Hi" and help me to remember your name.



We are always looking for volunteers to commit to at least 5 weeks of helping in the program from 3.30 to 5pm, so if you know of anyone who can help out, please put them in touch with Brother Frank Perkins at Edmund Rice on 9366 6436, or via the website www.ercrs.com.au. We are also looking for sponsors who might be able to help out with donations of food items suitable for an after school snack for the participants, so please get in touch if you know of someone who can help.

Thanks,
Elizabeth Diacos

Family Camp



In partnership with Edmund Rice Camps, ERCRS sponsored five families to a family camp during the September school holidays. It's a timeout for some people but when you are a single parent settling into a new life with many challenges, obviously, it would be more than that, as Margaret reflects in the following message. "Family camp was a fantastic opportunity for all parents and children who attended. Not only did we had fun, but we were exposed to a fresher environment as well as learning many new things and making connections."

Another parent was also quoted as saying that it had been a life changing experience, where she got an opportunity to have a self reflection time, as the children were being taken care of by wonderful young role models. Br. Frank who welcomed them back on the last day, could not help express how happy families were when they returned.

Back at the regular homework sessions, you could easily notice the positive influence of the family camp on some of our usually less focused children, who normally take time to settle to educational activities. They seemed to have smiley faces while doing their work.

Although this camp can take very few families compared to our entire number, we would say it is changing lives in many contexts. And the wave of positive energy goes beyond only those who attended the camp.



Volunteers' Dinner

Reflection By Elizabeth Smith

As I entered Indioz (Tandoori Indian Restaurant) on Friday the 29th of August I was greeted with the beautiful smell of Indian food and the joyful sound of people chatting. Volunteers from all across the organisation had come together for the Annual Volunteer Dinner and what a great night it was. Being my first Volunteer Dinner since I started volunteering with Edmund Rice Community & Refugee Services as a tutor I had great pleasure in meeting the many other volunteer tutors and sharing together in a delicious buffet meal. To top off a great night Biong and Brother Frank expressed their thanks to all the volunteers with a lovely speech. I have enjoyed volunteering with Edmund Rice and it was great to meet many others across the organisation who share the same enthusiasm as I do. I am definitely looking forward to next year's Annual Volunteer Dinner!



Roller Skating fun day out



Fun day out at the Sunshine Roller Skating Centre during September holidays was a highlight for St Albans homework club children during that break.

Sunshine Roller Skating Centre had not been discovered by any of the children we took out on that day, even though it is almost in our backyard.

Reasonably affordable, close to home, very entertaining and multicultural, it is an ideal location for children to spend time during school holidays with their families. They do not have to be stuck at home all through the school holidays.

This explains one important reason why ERCRS runs recreational activities for children.

During this outing, ERCRS managed to take 22 children accompanied by 16 Volunteers to the Skating Centre for a few hours, before a big lunch at McDonald Sunshine.

Arriving back to Errington Community Centre where they were picked up that morning from their parents, the children were asking whether it could possibly be a weekly activity that ERCRS would be taking them to. Although this would be nice, it is not feasible. However for little Deng, this was not the case as he had won four free visits as a prize.

BMLLEN Youth Expo

Brimbank/Melton Local Learning and Employment Network held a service providers Expo on 26th March at VU Sunshine Campus.

Edmund Rice Community and Refugee Services had an opportunity to showcase its programs to a wide audience. In the picture, ERCRS Director, Br. Frank, is up for the serious business of connecting with many other service providers.



Thank you...

To the Christian Brothers' Oceania Province and the ERCRS Board for their leadership and unwavering support in all areas of our work.

To the Edmund Rice Foundation Australia (ERFA), St. Patrick's College Ballarat, Minter Ellison Lawyers, Victorian Multicultural Commission (VMC) and the Stan Willis Trust, for their committed financial support of programs in our ministry.

To the volunteers, students and families that make up the ERCRS community, who are making the connections, engaging in the learning and building friendships on the ground, to make it all possible.

To our students and tutor-providing schools for their ongoing commitment, passion and support.

We would also like to thank the staff at Edmund Rice Camps Victoria, Good Shepherd Youth and Family Service, the Brimbank City Council, Centre for Multicultural Youth (CMY), and Catholic Regional College St Albans, for their ongoing support.

Volunteer Tutors wanted

- We are currently looking for enthusiastic, patient and committed individuals to provide one-on-one homework support & tutoring to primary and secondary students of a disadvantaged or refugee background. Our volunteer tutors come from all walks of life to assist young people with improving their literacy, numeracy and general study skills.
- **Primary Homework Club;**
- Mondays and Wednesdays at the Errington Community Centre, Princess St, St Albans- 3:15-5:15pm. Wednesdays & Thursdays 3:15-5:00pm at Sunshine Harvester Primary School, Sunshine.
- **Secondary Tutoring;**
- Tuesdays at the Errington Community Centre, Hall 2, St. Albans. 3:30-5:30pm or Saturday morning at the Catholic Regional College (St Albans) library, Cnr Theodore and Winifred Sts. 10:30am to 12:30pm

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