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WELCOME MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR

Kia ora koutou,

As we step into the New Year, I would like to take a moment to reflect on the incredible work we've done together over the past year, and to express my deepest gratitude for your continued commitment and support.

2024 was a year of challenges and triumphs. As a community, we faced difficult moments, but we also achieved so much. Thanks to the hard work and dedication of our volunteers, staff, and supporters, we were able to make a meaningful difference in the lives of those we serve. I'm proud of what we've accomplished and excited about the possibilities that 2025 holds for us.

Looking ahead, we know that there will always be work to do, and we are more determined than ever to continue our mission to support and uplift those in need. Our strength lies in our unity and our shared vision, and I have no doubt that we will face 2025 with the same spirit of resilience and kindness that has guided us so far.

On behalf of the ASST Board, I want to extend my warmest wishes to you and your families for a joyful, healthy, and prosperous New Year. Together, let's continue to build a community where everyone can thrive.

Ngā mihi nui,

Dr Bernard Sama

RECORD NEW CLIENTS

Our client services team has been handling a steady increase in new arrival asylum seekers, with an increasing need for emergency and essential needs such as resolving homelessness, need for food parcels, warm clothes, support with writing visa applications, and accessing income. In the month of November, we saw a record of 142 new referrals come to ASST. This large number of new clients, as well as our existing clients are handled by such a small client services team. I am very proud of our incredible staff, who strive to support each and every asylum seeker with dignity, respect and empathy.

DELAYS IN CLAIM LETTERS

Daily we are seeing the negative impact of the delays with Confirmation of Claim letters being issued for refugee claimants. Many asylum seekers are waiting a month or longer after submitting their refugee claim, to receive this letter, that proves they are in the refugee process. Unfortunately, asylum seekers cannot access basic care or resources without this document. We are seeing adults and children unable to access basic or emergency healthcare, unable to receive welfare assistance, and delays in children being able to attend school. This issue also exacerbates the homelessness issue faced by so many asylum seekers currently, as there is no income source to resolve homelessness.



ASST CHRISTMAS DRIVE

Asylum Seekers Support Trust's Christmas Drive is as busy as ever! This is the fourth year to have organised the Christmas Drive. Each year I am blown away by the generosity of our supporters and this year is no different. At a time where the cost of living is so high, increasing issues and stigma facing asylum seekers, and at a time where we have more clients than ever, it's incredible to see just how much support we have. We have been distributing our gifts to families already, and the response is one of overwhelming gratitude. Our children are so excited to have a gift specially picked for them, it is so delightful. A big thank you to Tax Traders, St Augustine's Church and the many individuals who have donated money, gifts and support to us this year!

Christina

END OF THE YEAR CELEBRATION FOR ASST HOSTEL RESIDENCE

On 14 December, the ASST Hostel came alive with a festive Christmas gathering, bringing together our clients, residents, and supporters. This special end-of-year lunch offered an opportunity to reflect on our collective achievements, share delicious food, and celebrate the strong sense of community built throughout the year. The warm atmosphere and shared laughter perfectly captured our commitment to supporting asylum seekers and fostering unity as we look forward to the new year. We extend our heartfelt gratitude to Pearls of Island for making this day truly memorable.

EMPOWERING 58 CLIENTS FOR EMPLOYMENT SUCCESS

58 clients came, many ready with CVs to check and work on together ❤️
 Lots of awesome information from employment new zealand on employees rights, and very practical information from red cross p2e on how to successfully get a job and be prepared for work 👍
 They all even got to practice with one another for job interviews and things like that.



Testimonial

Dear Asylum Seekers Support Trust Team:
 I hope this letter finds you in excellent health and high spirits. I am writing to express my heartfelt gratitude for the invaluable support and assistance I have received from your organisation since arriving in New Zealand on November 26, 2023, and applying for asylum.
 Firstly, I would like to extend my sincere thanks for the thorough education provided on the asylum seeker process. Understanding the steps involved and the requirements has been crucial for me in navigating this complex situation, and your guidance has been indispensable.
 Additionally, the legal support has been incredibly reassuring. The clarity and assistance provided have greatly alleviated the stress associated with my legal circumstances and I am immensely grateful for this aid.
 The educational support for my children has been a beacon of hope for our family.

We deeply appreciate your help in facilitating my children's continued education during this turbulent time. Moreover, the moral support I have received has been a source of enormous comfort. Knowing that there are compassionate individuals who genuinely care about our wellbeing has given us strength and hope during these challenging times.
 Lastly, I would like to express my gratitude for the food pack support. Your generosity has ensured that we have had access to nutritious food, which is a fundamental necessity.
 I would also like to thank Mr. Dawit, Ms. Christina, Ms. Vijitha, and Ms. May by name. Your dedication, kindness and unwavering support have made a significant difference in our lives and we are eternally grateful for your help.
 Thank you once again for everything you have done for us. Your support has been a lifeline, and we will always remember your kindness.

Mohomath R



Introducing Beyond Borders: Voice of Asylum Seekers Podcast

We are thrilled to announce the launch of Beyond Borders: Voice of Asylum Seekers, a podcast by the Asylum Seekers Support Trust (ASST). This inspiring series shares the stories, challenges, and triumphs of asylum seekers, providing a platform to amplify their voices and foster understanding and compassion. With three episodes already aired, the podcast explores compelling narratives and expert insights. Don't miss out—check out the episodes and join us in supporting those seeking refuge.

Asylum Seekers Support Trust is a Blessing!

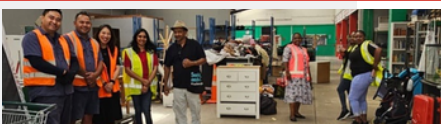


ASST is pleased to welcome three new board members, Mr Nadir Shafaq, Jane Smith and Dr Khurram Malik.

Asylum Seekers Support Trust (ASST) is an incredible team of people with huge hearts for helping others! Seeking asylum is a specialised need and trying to navigate it out on your own while trying to provide for your family in a foreign land is an extremely difficult task. My family had already been turned away several times for assistance with other organisations and this caused me anxiety and loneliness. My first contact with ASST was immediately uplifting - to have someone respond back quickly, to recognise our circumstances and to experience empathy from a stranger was good for my soul. I knew someone cared about us; that was priceless.

My first meeting was with Shilear, a Senior Social Worker, and I knew immediately that she was there to help me. I didn't have to defend myself again about our circumstances because Shilear was already on my side. It was really encouraging to not have to beg for help, to have help offered freely with compassion. I was grateful for the time she spent with me and her immediate offer of food assistance and a list of lawyers to contact. Shilear promised to follow up soon, and she did! I was added to Asylum Seekers groups for meetings, health presentations, employment information and driving practice.

As we come to the end of the year, Asylum Seekers Support Trust would like to express our heartfelt thanks for the tremendous support from Robbie and his team at Junk2GO. Robbie kindly and generously provides us with many household items including beds, kitchenware, bikes and more. The team load the items into the car for us. Thank you for your support.



My family and I were suddenly included in a diverse group of people all wanting to help each other. This was very refreshing. I had a huge issue with accessing Education for my family and was unable to get a Visa on my own, which was a huge obstacle for us to stay safely in New Zealand. Shilear, with her continual updates and checking in on me, stepped up to this difficult challenge. I must say, that I was shocked with the amazing results that Shilear so quickly achieved! She got everyone in my family a Visa from Immigration! This has vastly improved our lives, in many ways. I am so thankful that the team at Asylum Seekers Support Trust has opened their doors to people like my family who have left everything to find safety in New Zealand. From the friendly smile handing us food, to the organizers prioritizing our needs, meeting presenters empathetic to all our backgrounds and the incredible managers keeping focus on such specialized support - ASST is a Blessing!

WORKSHOP ON ASYLUM SEEKER ENTITLEMENTS

In November 2024, ASST held a workshop focused on asylum seeker entitlements, providing an overview of the support available to asylum seekers and refugee claimants in New Zealand. Key topics included accessing Work and Income benefits, healthcare services, schooling options, English classes, and other essential information to help navigate their new environment.

ZOO ADVENTURE: A SPECIAL TREAT FOR ASYLUM SEEKER FAMILIES

School holiday is a challenging time for Asylum seeker families as they have little resource and the children don't have much activity outside home. We are grateful to Auckland Zoo for offering 77 free tickets for asylum seeker families.



CHILDREN'S WELL-BEING AND SAFETY WORKSHOP

In December 2024, ASST organised a workshop about children and invited guests from the Ministry of Education, Plunket, and Neighborhood Support to discuss important information.

The Ministry of Education covered the New Zealand education system, the importance of school attendance, supporting children's learning, including English learning.

Plunket Whānau Āwhina provided information about health services available in New Zealand, including immunisations, school options and daycare facilities, guidelines on when it is considered appropriate to leave children unattended, the importance of car seats, laws regarding physical punishment of children.

Neighborhood Support discussed important information about safety and provide information about how Neighborhood Support works with the community to enhance safety.

Testimony from a client

I left my country, Syria, in 2012 because of the revolution and the war. The situation became unbearable, and I had no choice but to flee. I moved to Turkey, but life there was not easy. In Turkey, everything was difficult—a new language, a different culture, and a new community. As a refugee, I struggled to adjust to my new life. It was hard to find my place. I faced constant anxiety, panic attacks, and depression. I was overwhelmed by negative thoughts. I also had deep concerns about my family, wondering if they were safe. During that time, there was no way to communicate with them from Syria. The silence was unbearable.

My mind was full of worries—about my future, my destiny, and my family. The pressure felt overwhelming. I constantly felt depressed and stressed, with a heavy load on my mind. On top of that, the situation for Syrians in Turkey was very difficult. The daily news from Syria was heartbreaking—violent, tragic, and filled with horror.

I tried to find work to support myself, but it was incredibly difficult. As a foreigner and a refugee, opportunities were scarce. I felt frustrated and devastated, often questioning how I would survive. I spent nearly ten years in Turkey, enduring these hardships and struggles. The events of those years felt like an endless tragedy. w chapter in my life Eventually, I came to New Zealand, hoping for a better future. Now, I face similar challenges as a refugee. However,

the community here is more welcoming, and the opportunities are greater. Yet, despite the better circumstances, I find myself struggling with something else—I've lost my confidence and my belief in my own ability to build a new life.

I am trying to adjust to my new life, but the memories of my past are difficult to let go of. I don't want to dwell on the pain I experienced, but I know that I must move forward. I hope to rebuild my life here, with the support of the government and the Kiwi community.

I am determined to overcome the challenges, regain my confidence, and find hope for the future. I believe that with time and support, I can create a ne





MONTHLY PEARLS OF ISLAND - HOSTEL DINNER APPRECIATION

January 2025, we had the pleasure of having the Monthly Pearls of Island team hosting our hostel residents for a delightful dinner. The warm and welcoming atmosphere created by the staff made the evening truly special. The dinner was not only delicious but also a wonderful opportunity for everyone to connect and share moments of joy.

We are incredibly grateful to the Monthly Pearls of Island team for their generosity and hospitality. The kindness and thoughtfulness shown by all involved made this gathering memorable for our residents.

MESSAGE FROM THE GM

Dear Whānau,

As we step into 2025, I want to take a moment to express my deepest gratitude to all ASST volunteers, our alliance, donors, funders, board members, staff, and everyone who has supported us. Your dedication, hard work, and relentless pursuit of excellence have been the driving force behind all our achievements.

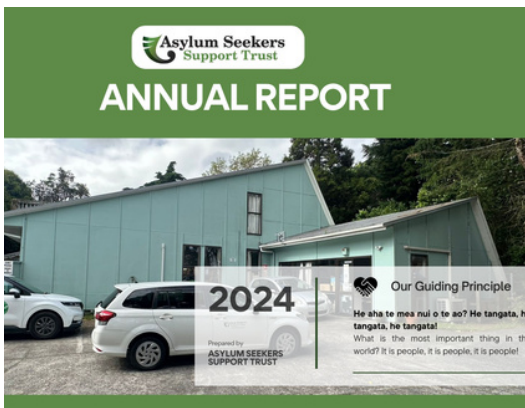
The past year has brought both challenges and triumphs, yet through it all, we have remained resilient, adaptive, and committed to our shared goals. It is your passion and perseverance that have made us stronger, and I am incredibly proud of what we have accomplished together. Looking ahead, I am optimistic for the opportunities the New Year holds. With our continued focus on innovation, collaboration, and success, I have no doubt that we will reach even greater milestones.

Thank you for all that you do. Here's to an exciting and successful year ahead!

Ngā mihi,

Stay safe and blessed





ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING & ANNUAL REPORT

In 2024, the Asylum Seekers Support Trust (ASST) hosted its Annual General Meeting, bringing together over 100 attendees, including community members, stakeholders, board members, staff, and clients. This gathering celebrated a year of significant achievements, from expanding client services and hosting impactful workshops to fostering community connections through events like zoo trips and monthly dinners. The AGM was an opportunity to reflect on the year’s progress, acknowledge the challenges faced, and reaffirm our shared commitment to supporting asylum seekers in New Zealand.

LAUNCH OF IMPACT EVALUATION REPORT 2024

The Asylum Seekers Support Trust (ASST) continues to make a transformative difference in the lives of asylum seekers in New Zealand. In 2024, ASST provided critical support to 1,804 individuals, addressing essential needs such as housing, food, and clothing, while also offering guidance on visas, employment, and social welfare. With a trauma-informed, needs-based approach, ASST prioritised high-need clients, enabling them to rebuild their lives with dignity.

Over 80% of surveyed clients reported that ASST had made a "huge" or "significant" difference in their lives. The 2024 Impact Report has been shared with key stakeholders, including policymakers and politicians, to highlight the importance of ASST’s work and advocate for sustainable funding. With growing demand, this support is crucial to continue welcoming, supporting, and empowering asylum seekers to thrive in Aotearoa.



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