

# SMILES FOR MASKS



**My Story**

**My family's story**

**Our Story**

*a plight without an end in sight*

A story by Neil Para



## The Arrival

### Chapter **1**

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On the 9th of August, 2012, a fishing boat was brought by the ADF Navy to Christmas Island with refugees who were desperately seeking protection from Australia. There were over 200 people on the boat including children, women, and men from Sri Lanka, Iran, Iraq, Afghanistan, and Pakistan. We were four of them and we are from Ceylon. At that time we were expecting a new family member. Yes, my wife, Sugaa was heavily pregnant with our young daughter, Nive, who was born two months after we arrived.

We were on Christmas Island for 10 days. During this time, Kartie, our youngest daughter when we arrived, she had her second birthday in Indonesia. She had diarrhoea at the time we arrived, therefore, Kartie and I had to be at Christmas Island hospital for most of the days. Sugaa also wasn't well due to her pregnancy. So, we all transferred to Darwin Detention Centre on the 20th of August, 2012. We had arrived on the mainland of Australia.

In Darwin, I was able to learn English and immediately started to speak without any hesitation even though I was speaking with mistakes. I will never forget the English mentors Pia, Laura, and Ben. Another important, friendly person was Dave. Dave was the man in charge of our activities.

What a gorgeous bunch of Serco officers! Everyone was sympathetic, kind, and lovely. They were showing lots of patience even when asylum seekers made them angry or were not listening. There was a particular couple, the girl from Germany who gave us hugs when we left the detention centre; that was new and strange for us because it wasn't in our culture. We saw tears in most of the Serco officers' eyes.

In the centre, we were given points for participating in activities

and English classes. One point was equal to a dollar. We were given 50 points as the maximum. It was difficult to get 50 points unless you were pregnant or had a valid reason to stay in the cabinet. We spent the point as our money at the shop in the detention centre. Children were given points as well. Even Sugaa was trying to keep herself busy by participating in some activities. However, she wasn't able to participate in English classes.



## The Detention centre

### Chapter **2**

Life was going well in the detention centre. Nivash had started a preschool in Darwin and she loved it. One day, our caseworker told us as we will be going to Brisbane and the date was set to fly. However, due to Sugaa's pregnancy, our release was postponed until the baby was born. Our youngest Nive was born in October at Royal Darwin Hospital. Serco officers Thelma and James were amazing in helping us. Nive was given her Australian birth certificate but, she was also given a boat ID even though she was born in Australia.

We were not able to go on any outings or excursions. While we were waiting for our release, I saw on the news about the fire damage in Tasmania. We worried about the people, especially children, and women. We knew how awful it would be when internally moving to seek shelter for refuge.



Photo credit: James - Serco officer (2012)

Therefore, Sugaa and I decided to donate our points to those people in need of care and support. When we spoke about it with Serco officers, they were happy to help but the condition was to buy things and donate as they did not want to get the points. So, Sugaa and I bought items for children and women.

We also used some of the points for us as well. All our 175 points (50×2 and 25×3) were used to buy things to send to Tasmania. Later, immigration told us not to send it. The reason was, we used the points and it was converted to money, which was the government's money. Refugees were told as if it was not our money because we should earn through activities; and so they deemed it to be the government's



money. After this, we had to stop buying things because we had bought items that were more than enough for at least 6 months for us if we stayed in the detention centre. I had admired the braveness of firefighters. I did not know they are volunteers but I wanted to see myself in that uniform.

The day had finally arrived to release us into the community. But Serco officers were a bit disappointed by this news. Their worries were we missed all outings and excursions. So, after obtaining permission from immigration, I believe that at Serco officers' expense, we went on some outings including Casuarina beach, NT, and Botanical Gardens in Darwin. We loved Botanical Gardens.

10th of January, 2013, some Serco officers spent the whole night with us, and we did not sleep. Even though we wanted to sleep, we felt honoured. On the 11th of January, 2013, we were released into the community in Dandenong, Victoria. Every single officer had happy tears in their eyes for us and gave hugs when we were leaving the centre.



## Leaving the Detention Centre

### Chapter **3**

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The department made a mistake by alerting us to be ready to go to Brisbane. Therefore, we were given the opportunity to choose where to go but we knew nothing. We were ready to go anywhere in Australia. So, we asked them if we can go to Melbourne because we met a mum and her three daughters in the detention centre. They knew we were coming from Christmas Island. Some Serco officers talked to refugees and gave some information. Even though we did not know each other, they welcomed us in Darwin. Sugaa and I started feeling like they were our mum and our sisters. Our request had been approved by the department!

We came to Dandenong. I had a migraine problem. No sleep, no food or water even if it was available on the plane; the language was the big barrier, hesitancy and shyness were the enemies on the plane. We did not ask for anything on the plane. Nivash and Kartie were loving and enjoying the flight, but Sugaa and I were sleeping most of the time. We arrived in Dandenong and as a surprise, that mum and her daughters were waiting for us with Sri Lankan-style rice and curry. We had it for the first time since we arrived in Australia.

AMES wanted to meet me immediately. A Tamil-speaking lady was waiting to take me to the AMES office in Dandenong. As soon as we arrived at the address, and I had to go. I had to have a quick shower in cold water. Very tired, I couldn't go but had to. We were walking to the office which was 2km from our given house. That was a lot for my body that day. The office was closed when we got there. We walked back to the house. I had to go again on Monday to meet our AMES caseworker, Radha, who spoke Tamil. I met Radha and I realized that we had a hearing with our BMA Lawyers in the same week. We weren't given an opportunity to speak with any advocates.

And the week after, we had our first hearing with the Department.

We went to the park close to our house where every person who came with questions was a refugee and came by boat. We were asked many questions:

“did we come by boat,

“did we come today,

which detention centre were we in,? and so many more.

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We received a negative decision on our claim within two months, which was super-fast. Our lawyer had made an appeal at Refugee Review Tribunal (RRT) and that hearing was on 31 May 2013, which was another 'super-fast' than usual time they were giving to others.

On the 3rd of September, we were given Bridging Visa E and advised to move to a countryside or rural area.



## Bridging Visa E

### Chapter **4**

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While we lived in the community detention, AMES had organized for us to learn English from Teacher Anita. A lovely, kind, and the caring teacher, one day she asked me,

“Neil, do you live in a tent “;

I hadn't shut the door. My reply was “No” without knowing its meaning.

Sugaa was and is giving priority to kids first. Therefore, she wasn't able to attend the classroom even though we had an offer from AMES to send kids to childcare. My eagerness to learn English was great so we could look after ourselves on our own.

I had to say that we had Karen as another caseworker from Red Cross where she was looking after our housing.

Once we were granted our Bridging Visa E (BVE) on 3rd of September 2013, the Department suggested moving to a regional area. I think, the Department had chosen my family to have a trial before they ask many refugees to move to a regional area as well as they tried the fast-track processing on our application too.

One of the friends of my mum, a student of my grandfather Jeyaseelan, had suggested Ballaarat. We looked on Google and liked it. After a couple of days, we came to see what Ballaarat looks like. We used to travel by public transport. Sugaa and I were from a village in Sri Lanka; we didn't like city life. As soon we arrived, we started to love its look and the buildings without knowing that Ballaarat was going to be our home. People smiling at us made us feel welcome.

I spoke to Karen at Red Cross about planning to move to Ballaarat. I also spoke to our new Caseworker Amanda at AMES



who was from Bendigo.

Karen and I came to Ballarat, she was representing me to speak with real estate agents. All said, they would give her a call, but even after one week, there was no call! Meantime, we had to move the accommodation we were living in. We had been given a six-week temporary accommodation in a Motel at Clayton. A few weeks have gone already.

I came to Ballarat again and walked into almost every real estate I saw. Some of them gave me addresses for open houses on that day. I walked there too. Having no car, it was easy for me to walk into every real estate but it was really difficult to walk to the houses. As I was new to Australia, I did not want to get a taxi as we'd had many bad experiences with taxi drivers in Malaysia. Very tired. Went back to Clayton and came back again to see one more try. No luck! Therefore, I was following the GPS to go to the station. On my way back to the station, I passed Hayden Real Estate (Not anymore in Ballarat).





## Finding a house

### Chapter **5**

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Walking on almost every street in Ballaarat without knowing anybody. My body was really tired and fatigued. Smiling faces gave me the energy to walk on the street for the purpose of getting a house for us. On the second day like the first day, returning home with no luck but promising myself, not to waste time in a strange place where I know nobody. When I walk on Sturt Street, I came across Hayden Real Estate but I was sick of looking for a house. Extremely worn out! Therefore, I was walking past without trying, my body was pushing me to the train station. My mind was telling me : “Why don't you try this one too?” I walked on my way for about 10-50 meters.

I decided to return and went back to the desk - nobody was on the desk at the time I went in. Julie, one of the property managers, was just leaving. I spoke to her, and explained my situation as I did in all other real estates. Julie might be very expert in reading body language. She looked at my face. I still don't know what was in her mind. She just replied, “Leave it with me”. The first person I met in Ballaarat who actually wanted to help when she knew I was a refugee.

When I received a phone call about an hour later, I was already on the train and the train was on its track to Melbourne. Julie was wondering if I was still in Ballaarat - there were a few more houses I could see from Hayden Real Estate. I was asked to meet her the next day at about 11 am. That phone call was promising. I would like to remind you that I was able to speak only a little English.

I went back to the motel. That night, I had a peaceful sleep, a great sleep to get up early in the morning. My dad says: “You can wait for somebody, but nobody can wait for you.” - that gives me the courage to be punctual in my life.

The next day, it was a rainy day in September, really cold weather for me as I was new to Australia. I went to Ballarat to meet Julie on time. I was given a welcoming smile and asked, "How was your train?" Good, I replied. In my early life in Australia, I didn't want to speak a lot because I could not have a lengthy conversation. The language was the barrier!

Julie was about to give me a print where three houses were situated to have a look at. "Take this, I will meet you at this house." She pointed to an address. She then asked me if I had a car. "No. I walk," I replied in low voice.



## A house in Ballarat

### Chapter 6

Julie and I went to see the houses in her car. I was asked to tell her my preferences. My second preference was a house in Black Hill. Julie explained the benefit of having the Black Hill house, which was convenient for a family to start a new life in a new place. I decided I wanted this house. She took me to the office, helped me with paper work and told me to see her again to pick up the keys in a week. Wow! Out of six-weeks of accommodation, five weeks had gone already. Finally, my family knew we were moving to Ballarat. That was a great decision for both Sugaa and me.

Julie was the first Ballarat person who welcomed me. I phoned Sugaa first. I phoned Karen to tell her the news. She was very happy for us. A few minutes later, Karen called me back and gave me Carmel's number to speak with.

After speaking with Carmel, she picked me up, and we went to Ballarat Regional Multicultural Centre, where I had the

chance to meet with Ann and Sundram.

After the meeting with some beautiful people at Ballarat Regional Multicultural Centre, Carmel



dropped me off at the train station. Six-weeks accommodation had nearly come to an end. We went to our friends' house to spend a few nights with them before we left for Ballaarat. They were the best nights for all of us. We also had kept our things at their house before we went to the Clayton Motel.



On the 26th of September, we went to see Julie to get the keys and we were brave enough to go in a taxi this time to our new house. It was our first

r e n t a l  
property. We didn't know that we had an empty house. September is a month of spring and cold for many. It was freezing for us. We had nothing to sleep on or cover us, but we had a wall-mounted heater in the lounge room, and the floor was carpeted. We decided to sleep just in front of the heater.



## Our Home in Ballarat

### Chapter 7

We had moved into an empty house. We had to sleep in front of the heater and on the carpet and close to each other that night. We had nothing at home even to make cups of tea. I went to our friend's house in Melbourne the next morning to bring our things, including our blankets and quilts which were given by either AMES or Red Cross. We were also given \$3000-\$4000 worth of white goods and a double-size bed with a mattress once we moved into our new house in Ballaarat.

I went to Melbourne to bring our things, but in our new house, Sugaa and the girls had nothing to eat. I was able to hire a Hiace van to bring all our things to Ballaarat. Our friend gave us food to take for Sugaa and the girls. Otherwise, we would have gone to bed unfed.

On the 28th of September, Sugaa and I cleaned the house and



Photo at House of Welcome  
Carmel's house

started our new life in Ballaarat. We went for a little walk on the

street to see some places. We saw a police car coming. Because of the experiences we had in Sri Lanka and Malaysia, we were nervous and panicking and scared to see the police.

Over the next couple of days, Carmel visited us with some blankets and doonas. Carmel was a regular visitor for a while. Carmel had sent one of her friends to take us to the library where there was a refugee event. We met wonderful ladies later. Kath, Maureen, and Margaret are some of them. Kath was waiting to see us. After she met us, Kath had a quick visit to our house that night. It was a great visit. Everything starts with a first step. Since then, Kath was one of our regular visitors to us. She had become part of our family. She was visiting us almost every two days.

At the same time, I received a phone call from Colin, who was volunteering to teach English to people like us, he was a great mentor. Every migrant should have a mentor like Colin if anyone would like to integrate into the new society. With Colin, I learn something every second. He cares for me like my dad.

Everyone in the family had Bridging Visa E with work and study rights. So, I was looking for work. Like many other refugees, I was also looking for a cleaning job. Getting a job wasn't easy for me. I applied via "seek.com.au". I received a phone call.

## Living and Working in Ballarat

### Chapter 8

We love Ballarat. Walking to Black Hill Look out was our favourite spot until the council knocked down the mountain top. We were able to look at the Lake and Australia Day fireworks in January.

In October, we received a phone call asking us for a second hearing; the reason was, unfortunately, the first member at the RRT wasn't able to take a decision. He seemed to be a caring and sympathetic member who was trying to understand my family well. Perhaps, immigration decided something for my family. We

had our hearing for about 15-30 minutes with a second member on the 15th of October. I received a phone call regarding my job application for a cleaning



position. English wasn't good. But I was able to respond with 'yeses' actually 'yeas and nos'. After a few seconds, I was asked about my own transport. I sadly missed this job as I was expected to have my own transport.

Because we had work rights BVE, Red Cross was giving us some assistance until I got a job. Therefore, I was able to save some money but it wasn't enough to buy a car. One of our best friends we met in Dandenong and his wife, the Backus family



had lent some money to add on. I had licenses from Sri Lanka. I bought a Toyota Camry, a 1999 model -a green lovely car. Until I had the car, I did not accept any calls and now, I was asked for Victoria's License. My luck didn't work. I wasn't able to get that job too even though I told them I can get it soon. After all those barriers, I got my license in January 2014 and I applied for a cleaning position. I was offered the position in the Point Cook, Victoria Stockland Shopping Centre, and I started my first shift. The family was very happy even though I needed to leave at about 10.30 pm on the 2nd of February 2014 to start the night shift on the 3rd. Night work from 1 am to 9 am for 5 days a week. Therefore I had to commute from and to Ballarat.

Meantime, on the 7th of February 2014, we were given a negative decision on our asylum application which is called a "double negative" and that was very super-fast to give results while others were waiting for more than three years and some refugees had waited for five years. But neither the department nor our lawyer told us that we couldn't work now.



## Bridging Visa E (BVE) Revoked

### Chapter 9

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BVE was granted on the 3rd of September, 2013, spent time getting a job, 07th of February 2014, our BVE has been revoked. Since then, for nine years, I have been living in Australia without a valid visa of any kind. I didn't know it. Red Cross has been informed by the lawyer as we were upset about the outcome and wanted to harm ourselves. Therefore, Red Cross rang me and spoke a few minutes. I was advised to continue the job, which I started in Point Cook just four days before the decision. They further said that as they stopped the financial assistance because we had a negative outcome, we were also asked to pay some money back to them. We were unable to pay for it. Our wonderful friend Kath passed the outcome to Circle of Friends (It was later founded as 'Ballarat Rural Australians for Refugees').

So, Margaret visited us to gather some information. She had come across me as I was driving the car without insurance. Circle of Friends paid for comprehensive insurance. We didn't know that they were going to look after us for nine years. I was making a note about every time they spent money on us. In the same month after the decision was taken, my family was asked to go to immigration to sign the code of behaviour. They knew I was working. Cleaning Contractors found I was working without a valid visa and asked to get a visa. Chad was the contractor, and he gave me a letter to take to the department to show because he believed they would give me the right to work.

On the 28th of May, 2014, after finishing my shift at 9 a.m., I went to the immigration to speak. I was advised to stop if I am working until the department contacts me. From then until today, when I contact them, same answer, we will contact you. Please be patient.

The rest of the year ended with hope. Our friends Kath, Rose, and Ballarat Rural Australian for Refugees were planning to do a "Let them stay" gathering in Ballarat in January 2015. That was the very first time they had a gathering for us and created the #lethemstay. This had become popular Australia wide soon after the gathering.

In January 2015, after the rally/gathering, senator, the late John Madigan handed over some files about us to Peter Dutton, and John Madigan was really positive about the meeting with Peter Dutton.

After a month of commuting to work in Point Cook, I decided to share a room with someone.

Our Kath Morton.  
23/04/1928 - 16/12/2020



## Mr. Peter Dutton

### Chapter **10**

While the Ballaarat community was waiting to hear from Peter Dutton, we were having regular visitors. Margaret was the other friend who was visiting regularly, reading books to our children and as a result, my children are the best readers now. Margaret was another grandmother for my kids, she was and is taking care of them wherever we all go. Kath is like our grandmother who did many things for us. Danielle and Shae had visited us first, after knowing about us from Kath. They are sisters. Sugaa and I started to feel like they are our sisters too. Even though there is no will, they agreed to be the guardians of our children just in case anything happened to Sugaa and me.

I had to mention that, Nivash was able to do only a few weeks of kinder in the last school term. She didn't know any English.

Our Community Involvement started as soon as we arrived at the Detention Centre. However, we were able to do a little bit of volunteer work when we arrived at Ballaarat. I wish we could do more. End of the year 2013, we went for a working bee at the Kindergarten. That was our first working bee where we were able to meet some parents. We still know each other, and some of them have become good friends. To feel integrated, we should know our neighbours first. So, we wrote Christmas cards and New Year cards to our neighbours and put them in the letter boxes. We received greeting cards and chocolates.

When Nivash started primary school in 2014, she didn't understand anything until the first part of Grade Two because of the language. She was crying and hated going to school. Sugaa and I were helping as volunteers or parent helpers at the school. We were able to meet and make lots of friends through school.

When we became jobless because of no visa, my family slowly

become a burden to the community even before I knew the community well. I had become a member of the Asylum Seeker Resource Centre (PS: I don't like ASRC now). Maureen had organised a house renting to solve our immediate problems for a couple of fortnights. Then ASRC agreed to pay the rent.

As Carmel was a regular visitor for a while, she was able to organise our food voucher (I have no permission from them to give details about them. Sorry). We had started to receive \$100 Woolworths vouchers weekly. It was a big value when our kids were six, four, and two years old. They did it every week for the last nine years. Without Carmel, we wouldn't be able to have food on the table.

We did not know any history of Australia other than knowing about Australia Day fireworks but later when we knew a little more story, we avoided going to the Australia Day fireworks and I changed the way I spell Ballaarat.

On the 26th of January, 2015, we went to see Fireworks from the Black Hill lookout where we met Kristina, Alan, and Matt from Lal Lal photographic group.



Senator  
Late John Madigan

## Being part of the Community

### Chapter 11

I asked Kristina, "Can you take a photo of the fireworks from here before knowing about the cameras and lenses?" I later become a member of the Lal Lal Photo group. I started to take photos of Ballarat and its surroundings. I don't know how good my photos are, but my friends are giving me good feedback. My photos can be found on Facebook (MYEVENTIN) and Instagram (Outdoorlifebyneilpara).

In the winter of 2015, we all had flu. As we don't have Medicare, it costs 'an arm and a leg' to see a GP so we ignored seeing the doctor. However, we didn't tell anyone. At one stage, we were frustrated and depressed and it led us to decide to harm ourselves. We would have been forgotten after a news highlight in local media and maybe Australian news too.

A Tamil Saying: 'We have food for us on this earth. We should finish it before departing'.

Our good time arrived! Maureen knocked on the door. We had actually cried. She didn't know why, but she realized we were not well. We went to see the GP at the cost of her pocket or Ballarat Rural Australians for Refugees (Ballarat RAR).



As I wanted to join the firefighting crew, I applied for Country Fire Authority (CFA) in 2015. Unfortunately, they did not respond to my application. I was really feeling selfish at this point, I wanted to keep my mental health in good condition. I wanted to work. However, I didn't know anything about Victoria State Emergency Service (VICSES). When I met another friend, Clare, she said as they raise money for SES, SES trains people -You can try.

I applied to VICSES in 2015, it was a Christmas breakup time for them, but I received a call from Josh. In February 2016, I went for the information night and signed up to become an SES volunteer. Today I am one of the (Deputy) Crew Leaders at VICSES Ballarat Unit with many qualifications, my friends and family are very proud to see me in VICSES orange. My blood is orange now.

I can see Sugaa and me improving our English by getting involved in the community.: 'Working bees' at school and kindergarten; parent helpers, on Australia Day cleaning up; taking photos as a volunteer or amateur photographer at the local events - these are just some of them. However, Koby was wondering if I could take a photo of the 'rainbow flag raising at the front of Town Hall'. Being a photographer for 'ainbow flag raising' gave me a great feeling to support the beautiful course at its early stage.

Meantime, Sugaa applied to Ballarat Health Services to become a volunteer in an Aged Care Facility - she got it, and there she was learning English. Residents in that facility loved Sugaa's smile and her little English. You can see Sugaa's photo in the Ballarat Health Services brochure at the Ballarat Base Hospital.

## A Holiday

### Chapter 12

It was two years since our visas had been revoked in 2014. Our hope to get at least a work rights, our hope was - we will get it next week, or next month and we were slowly thinking it would be great if we get our work rights at least by next year!

Nivash was telling Kath that her friends were going to Tasmania for their holiday, and that friend told Nivash she could go there too. So, she wanted to go without knowing the situation, and she told Kath that we were going to Tasmania. Kath knew we hadn't money to go anywhere. Kath went home, and later that day, she gave me a call, and I was asked to accept a gift as she further said it was from her family. My English was still limited, I refused first, because it was not easy for me to refuse to accept the gift rather than start a conversation, but I was requested to accept the envelope., "Did you tell our children?" I asked. "Yes," Kath replied. There was enough money to cover our costs.

We were getting ready to go to Sydney, and our friends, Doreen and Des, and their friends. had also given us some money to go to Sydney. We went through to Canberra; staying overnight in a campground. The kids loved the view from Telstra tower. The next day, we went to Sydney, where we were trying to find a campground or somewhere to stay for a few nights. It was really difficult, we knew nobody there. I put it on Facebook.



Kathir, a Tamil friend from Holland, called me and gave me the details of his relatives Sulo and Santhamalar. Sulo and Santhamalar are from Sri Lanka. They were helping,



advocating, and supporting refugees in Parramatta and surrounding areas. Sulo is also a regular visitor to detention centres. We were very happy to meet them and stayed with Santhamalar until we returned to Ballaarat. We had lovely times with them.

When we got back home, there was a letter in the letterbox from the department to do a health check for Sugaa, Nivash, and Kartie to grant Temporary Protection Visas(TPV) or Safe Haven Enterprise Visas(SHEV). We had to make an appointment at our cost at Bupa in Melbourne. Annie had paid the cost happily as we were going to get a visa. We went to Bupa, and we asked at the desk curiously “what visa?” Looking on the screen, “You are from a regional area, it should be SHEV” replied came from the desk. I replied “Ok”.



## Visa setbacks

### Chapter **13**

There wasn't a scale to measure our happiness when we came out of the Bupa building! We were actually walking in Melbourne City, with hopes and plans. We were waiting for another call from the department. But we received no phone calls. I rang the immigration office in April to see what was going on. The officer or caseworker spoke from the other end saying that he could not find our details. Are you calling from Sri Lanka? No, I replied. I am from Ballarat Victoria. He cut the phone with my permission. He got back to me and said, "you are supposed to be in Sri Lanka. It was an error. You should immediately prepare to leave Australia." The phone call was threatening! I cut the phone. I received phone calls only two times.

Later the same year, I received an invoice from the department, asking to pay the RRT fee and the money that the Red Cross was wanting me to pay, so a total of \$8300. Carmel wrote to them about the situation and mentioned that we are not able to pay it back until having work rights. The reply from the department was clear; they said they cannot give a visa when there is a debt to Australia. Carmel wrote them back asking for an installment of \$100 per month. Department had replied to this that they would only consider to re-issue the visa once they had received 70% of the total which was a too big an amount. As we live on the generosity of Ballarat and its surroundings, we could not ask people to pay for it. Therefore, I was asking for help from Tamils via my friends Gobi and Rajesh who both live in Dandenong.

\$8300 was paid in full but in three instalments. However, the department said again, they would get back to us when they have word from the minister. It could be anytime.

End of 2016, Ballarat Rural Australians for Refugees organised

a "High Tea" to raise funds for our legal costs. The idea was from Colin, supported by Danielle, Shae and their families, and Jeni.

In 2017, we went to either the federal court (FC) or the federal circuit court (FCC) and lost again. Our Ballarat friend David was taking the case as a pro bono lawyer. I am not sure which one first (- FC? Or FCC?)

The same year, Black Hill Primary school had given me the Catherine King award for community service which was a milestone for me. Sugaa was given an opportunity to do Leadership Victoria through BRMC. I also received an award from Friends of Refugees for community service in the same year. 2018, the house we were renting was on market for sale. The new owner wanted to renovate the house so, we had to move to another house. As you know, we weren't and aren't in a position to take decisions by ourselves.



**Ballarat RAR**  
extends a cordial invitation to a

**HIGH TEA**

**For Refugees**

**Sunday 18th September 2016 at 3pm**

**Ballaarat Mechanics' Institute**

**117 Sturt St Ballarat Vic 3350**

## New Accomodation

# Chapter 14

After 5 years of living in our first rental property, we now had to move to another house. Our life is a hateful life - no Australians can walk in our shoes - even if they have compassion and sympathy. We were unable to decide to find another house even though I know I can get a house quickly. I explained to Ballaarat Rural Australians for Refugees and they understood it. Now, as our rent had been paid by the ASRC, I explained to them. They understood. As the rents were going up always, I was given what they can pay as the maximum rent per week and was asked to find a house under that amount.

When I was looking for a house, my considerations were to get a house in a good school zone, affordable rent for ASRC, and respond to VICSES calls were important for us. I applied to some of the properties that Sugaa and the girls liked. We received calls from real estate and approved them. We now informed ASRC by email with all details including the rent which was a lot lower than the rent they could go maximum per week, and ASRC told us to sign the agreement and send a copy. We did it. After signing the agreement, ASRC told us over the phone, they could not pay our rent and that Sri Lankans can go back to Sri Lanka. They further said that they were happy to help



us to depart Australia. They further advised me to discuss it with Sugaa and the children. I had requested them to pay the first rent and I will try to organise it. They declined my request to pay at least a week's rent even! I got upset and angry, I told them, "You are not the government to tell us to go back!"

I phoned the real estate to cancel the agreement. They wanted me to pay the re-listing cost. Ballaarat RAR paid for it and my family had become homeless unexpectedly because of ASRC's action.

We had to move all our things to Kath's house and we went to Doreen and Des' house while I was looking for a house. Meantime, Ballaarat RAR members were helping us to clean the house that we were vacating.

Ballaarat RAR wrote to ASRC about the difficulties that my family was having with ASRC's decision. This is the time ASRC thought they just did wrong to a family who had support from RAR, RAR is one of the organisations that donates money to ASRC. They agreed to pay rent for the next 12 weeks but remember, they declined to pay at least one week's rent when I pleaded with them. My question to ASRC is: "You hurt any refugees if they don't have support from others? You extended your offer only to protect your reputation."



## A New House and Friends

### Chapter **15**

We don't know how many refugees and asylum seekers are experiencing it like my family from ASRC. While the big refugee advocating groups talk about the trauma caused by the government, they are doing the same thing: traumatizing and tormenting people like us! They want us to keep it quiet. Even though the previous chapter was negative with the ASRC, I wanted to tell you so I can see the positive in the future for many people in our situation.

I got another house approved where we are now living. While ASRC paid the first 12 weeks, our friends Danielle, Shae, and Maureen were able to arrange a plan for our rental property. A group of people came together to put in \$7-\$10 per week or a one-off donation. I don't know everyone. Now this group pays our rental.

We have now moved to a great neighbourhood area in Ballaarat North. Julie, who worked at Hayden, now at Buxton real estate, was giving great feedback, I think. Since I moved to Ballaarat, I was able to help some refugees and migrants to find a house very quickly, I don't know how that works.

We wrote a piece of information about our family along with a family photo. There are 22 houses in the court where we live now. We put that information in all letterboxes. What a great welcome we received. Since then, I have known everyone and they all know my family very well. We had afternoon tea with some people, and we had lunch and dinner with some people.

Our neighbours Mick and Kirsty went above and beyond. They sent our details to the siblings of the first owner of the house we live in now. They live in QLD and NSW. They all sent letters with a photo of the owner. Anne, the sister of the owner, had sent a letter and a book she had illustrated with my children's photo

and wrote a beautiful story. She used the photo that we put in the letterboxes.

We don't know these beautiful people, but we put the photo in a magnetic holder on our fridge, and the photo is still there. One day on a summer holiday, I saw a few cars in our driveway, and we had a great feeling when we knew who they were. As soon they came in, they saw their brother's photo on the fridge. We didn't know they would be visiting us. We saw tears in their eyes, and they gave us a hug. We let them walk into all the rooms. The TV and couches we placed were exactly the same as his brother used to have, they said.



## Without a Roof Exhibition

### Chapter 16

Once we moved to the second house in June 2018, we were enjoying the water park over the summer but the water park needed an upgrade. Also, I saw some intersections and roundabouts were unsafe to cross the road. I always believe in teamwork. Therefore after a long discussion with me, myself, and I, I decided to start a working committee. I advertised on nextdoor social media and emailed the City of Ballarat. I was able to start a small group.

We had meetings with many people who were able to put their ideas, suggestion, and support to reach the right people. Cat was the president of the committee, and Jay, Lynette, the late Wayne, and I met monthly. We also had Frank sometimes in the meeting.

Ballarat North, Midlands Reserve Water Park was upgraded and beautiful. There was a new roundabout where primary school kids were waiting a long time to cross the unsafe intersection without a roundabout.

In 2019, after the election, our kids wrote a letter to then-Prime Minister Scott Morrison. He replied to our children, that was a great feeling because, he doesn't like refugees, and we aren't citizens either.

**WITHOUT A ROOF**  
THE HOMELESS

**A PHOTO EXHIBITION**  
Neil Para

10 JUNE 2019 - 23 JUNE 2019  
10 AM - 5 PM / 7 DAYS A WEEK


ENTRANCE FREE  
DONATIONS WELCOME

VENUE: BALLARAT TRADES HALL  
24 Camp St, Ballarat Central VIC 3350

PROUDLY SUPPORTED BY

My photo exhibition about the Homeless.





The reply was written politely and he mentioned it as he had forwarded it to then-immigration minister David Coleman. David Coleman's reply was a good one too. Our children had mentioned their dreams when they grew up in Australia what they want to be. Nivash wants to be an invasive cardiologist at Ballaarat Base Hospital (Grampian Health Services), Kartie wants to be a rock star in music and Nive wants to be a vet. Kartie is now adding to be a psychologist as well as a rock star too, and I hope, Nive will change again to something. David Coleman did not give us a visa but, he had wished children's dreams come true. He might have stopped or been controlled by another minister(s). Who knows?

When we contacted the department, we were advised that they were waiting to hear from the minister on behalf of our family where they were saying, "Please wait, we will get back to you when we have any news." I had seen those two replies in two different ways. One was something positive, and one was nothing. I didn't want to think of anything else.

I received help and support as a reward or award from Ballaarat Arts Foundation for my photography exhibition, ideas to bring awareness of homelessness. The exhibition was titled , "Without A Roof" by our daughter.

To hold this exhibition, Ballaarat Trades Hall was supporting by giving free space. John was lending his frames absolutely free of charge. Merle, Maureen and one more friend (forgotten who that was – sorry about that), were sitting at the exhibition when I wasn't there. Lots of people were visiting the exhibition, one day a busload of people from Melbourne. They said that they were listening to Power FM and heard about this exhibition. The exhibition was for two weeks and raised over \$1000 for our local homeless people.

## Special Events

### Chapter 17

In two weeks, so many people were visiting and giving their donations too. Some schools also visited with students. I was invited to give a talk at Ballarat High School and St James Sebastopol Primary School. I am not a great speaker in front of a group of people even now. Brett at Trades Hall counted the raised money, on the last day, in front of the last minute visitors to the exhibition. To make it fun, people were asked to guess. As it was a two-week exhibition, I didn't even think that the donation would be \$200.




But it was \$1070. 100% donation was given to the Ballarat Uniting Care!

Sugaa started to volunteer at the Ballarat Information Centre in 2019 as well as volunteering in an Aged Care Facility since 2016. Our involvement in the

community as volunteers, was helping us to keep busy, mentally and physically healthy, and learn a language that we never spoke before coming to Australia. As a result, even though we don't have a visa of any kind, we were - and are happy.

Our involvement in the community is with local groups like: Friends of Black Hill Reserve, Friends of the Yarrowee River, Clean Up Australia Day, Tree Plant Day, Working Bees at school, ANZAC Day, Remembrance Day .... and many more.

When I say ANZAC Day, I should tell a story that, during the covid lockdown, ANZAC services were limited to a number. I



did it in our front yard and asked the neighbours to stand in front of their driveway. I had set up a nice service and turned the radio on my car for the local ABC channel for the dawn service. Every neighbour came with a candle to his or her driveway, some came to our front yard too. I sent the photo to The Courier and they published it.

I could see how Australians accept us when we are integrated and giving back to the country where we want to call ourselves proud Australians to have their passports. My family is already feeling like Australians, Ballarat is our home. There is no racism when you are Australian by your action. When I was new to Ballarat, we had a welcoming and inclusive feeling. Now we welcome others too because we belong to Ballarat.

I have initiated a :“Look after your footpath” Facebook group, which is to encourage you to pick up the rubbish when you go for a walk. Sadly, that group did not reach the people. I have also created a WORKING BEES Facebook group to encourage people around Australia to join and post their local Working Bee details, so new residents can find and go to meet and greet people. It will also help in many ways to anyone who is new in that area permanent or temporary. Like the other group, this group also didn't reach many people.

I was running a shop run during the lockdown for those who had concerns to go shopping. Some people put an extra \$5-\$10 for my fuel, but I never expected it. I was helping as a volunteer.

My family really had a very bad time during the lockdown. So when the lockdown condition allowed for gathering, Ballarat RAR had a picnic at Slaty Creek, Creswick, Victoria, just for us. While I was enjoying taking the photos of our children, I fell into the creek, and hit my wrist on a log.

## Medical Health Care - Medicare

### Chapter **18**

We had a picnic by the creek. As a photographer, I was taking photos of my children and the forest. I had a fall when I was crossing the creek. I hit a log with my wrist. It was ok at the time I hit but, that night, it hurt a lot. I could not sleep. I called Doreen after the world went to sleep. We went to the Emergency Department (ED) and had to wait a long time. Doreen explained the situation we were in and agreed to pay the invoice later. I had to have an x-ray and it was \$600, and I needed to visit our GP at the Eureka Medical Centre. That cost \$84. Ballaarat RAR had paid GP, but were waiting for the X-ray bill. GP asked me to do another X-Ray. I assumed that could be another \$600 and had to visit GP again for \$84.

After all, this happened to me, I was thinking why should I pay? I believe Ballaarat RAR was also finding a way to ask for a waiver. Meantime, I wrote an email to Catherine King MP, now minister under the ALP government. Catherine had emailed the hospital and it got waived.

I spoke to a few people to work together to change the policy for people like us without any Medicare card to access the health system. There was a waiver in the policy by the Department of Health (DH), but it wasn't clear.

Finally, I had come up with the name called "Failed Asylum Seekers Emergency Medical Access (FASEMA)"

Colin and Hayley helped to communicate with DH. I was emailing all senators and MPs. Only a few emails were bounced, but all other emails were delivered and received automatic replies to acknowledge. I received two replies one from a Greens senator who replied "thank you so much for contacting me about the cruelty of live exports. Like you, I am passionate about animal welfare and believe live exports are

abhorrent and cruel". I was laughing and did not reply to him. The other reply was a good reply from Senator Sarah Henderson.

Senator Henderson forwarded my emails to the DH. I was able to change the policy with Colin and Hayley's support. I asked some refugee advocacy groups to let refugees and asylum seekers know about the changes in policy in which expired Medicare cards will be the evidence for asylum seekers. That was my request too. While I was communicating with DH, one organization raised their unhappiness. I made a video (available on my Facebook page) to spread the word. But a few groups were not happy with me for doing this and the reason was, the promotion of the "needs of Medicare support for refugees and asylum seekers" help to raise money.





## The Best Neighbour

### Chapter 19

In 2020, I received a phone call from nextdoor social media, who informed me that Cat had nominated me for the neighbourhood award for being the best neighbour and wishing me congratulations. I was the winner for Victoria. There are so many best and most wonderful neighbours around us. I read on Facebook posts saying, "my attitude depends on you." Taking note of that, to be the best neighbour, we should be surrounded by the best neighbours. Even if I was the winner, I would say, my neighbourhood was the winner.

As one of the winners, I was rewarded by 'nextdoor Australia, and received some money. I donated that money to the Committee for Ballaarat North, which was initiated by me. This incredible news was in The Courier titled as: "Neil Para named as one of the best neighbours in Australia". That news was shared and republished by many news media around Australia.

In 2021, on the first Sunday of the refugee week in June, I walked around Lake Wendouree which was 6.2km, carrying 18.5kg to demonstrate 2691 days without any visa of any kind. I have put 1 gram/day/person in the family plus an additional 5 kg to think about other refugees, asylum seekers, as well as everyone who needs care. It was 20.5kg in total in Refugee Week 2022. Many Rural Australians Groups gave me support and encouragement: Ballaarat RAR, Daylesford RAR, Trentham RAR, Queenscliff RAR, Queanbeyan RAR, Ballaarat Community Health, Ballaarat Regional Multicultural Centre, Ballaarat House of Welcome, Refugee Council of Australia, Naturale (a local business), Amnesty International and all news media in Ballaarat, A Community radio from Canberra and many more.

Sorry if I have missed your name. There were hundreds of people walking with me and that was my dream, it is always good when you stand with us, but it is better when you walk

with us.

Peter is one of the great photographers on this beautiful earth. He was helping me to have a beautiful poster and he took photos at the walk. Cr McIntosh and Cr Coates were speaking at the walk.

I hope we are Australian Citizens before the first Sunday of Refugee Week 2023. However, I will do this walk for others even if we become Australians. I would like to see this mental health walk happen all around Australia on the first Sunday of the Refugee Week each year.

I will walk again this year on Sunday, 18 June 2023 at 12 noon. Our daughter Nivash wrote poems and read at the walk. Her poems are great. She had been invited as a guest speaker to read her poem at Compassionate Ballarat.



## No ending our fight for permanent visas

### Chapter **20**

Our friends Siva and Mathi had asked me to do a Thaipongal event in the Ballaarat area as they were trying to show Tamil Heritage Festivals in Australia. Siva had asked me a few times in the past too. This time, Mathi visited our house with his family and they promised me to do anything they can help do the Thaipongal in Ballaarat.

So, Sugaa and I planned to do the Thaipongal as a Harvest Festival and I was dreaming to bring many cultural ways of harvest festival. Thaipongal was celebrated in Garibaldi, Victoria as the “Multicultural Harvest Festival Australia”. This year it is celebrated as Harvest Festival – Garibaldi. Our aim is to make it one of the great festivals in our region and Australia. The local people in Garibaldi and the Golden Plains Shire council are very supportive of this wonderful event. This year it was on 29th January 2023 with lots of food and they are free for everyone. Public events and entry are also free.

It was 3287 days (Nine years) since our BVE had been revoked on this 07 February 2023, a plight without an end in sight I have finished our stories at this stage, but here are our timelines from the story.

Arrived in Australia (Christmas Island) by boat – on 09 August 2012

Arrived at Darwin Detention Centre – on 20 August 2012

Arrived at Dandenong Community Detention Centre – on 11 January 2013

Moved to Ballaarat – on 26 September 2013

Nivash went to Kindergarten for a few weeks in the last term, 2013



Nivash went to Black Hill Primary School – in February 2014

The negative outcome from Refugee Review Tribunal – on 07 February 2014

Visas had been revoked – on 07 February 2014,- I did not know about it.

The last day of my work – on 28 May 2014

Sugaa started volunteering at the Aged Care - 2016

Joined the VICSES – February 2016 intake (Officially recorded 15 March 2016)

Deployments, 5 days including traveling (1+3+1):

Deployed to Warrnambool during the Cobden fire, Manningham SES for the storm, Port Macquarie for flood, Swan Hill for flood, Gippsland storm and flood.

Many, “one day” assisting for land searches.

Assisting to other agencies also many times.

Many Numbers of SES responses, in records - Over 600 (accepting 600 calls in 6-7 years is really hard for those who have to work and volunteer - I am not working)

Currently I am a deputy crew leader with many skills, however, I am still learning English.

A holiday trip to Sydney via Canberra – 7 days, December 2016 – January 2017

Advised by the department to do a medical test – January 2017

Advised that the medical test request was an error – April 2017 (Department always need a reason to deport, they might have checked our health)

Catherine King Award for community service – 2017 (Proud moment, but there are lots of other people who deserve it too)

Friends of Refugees Award for community service – 2018 (Happy moment)

Ballaarat Arts foundation Awards - 2018

Without A Roof photo exhibition for homelessness awareness – 2018.

Homelessness is one of the biggest issues in Australia. I have a plan, but I want to become a citizen first, then I need a group of like-minded people to join a team. The team should agree not to have a CEO even in the future because, in my opinion, those charity organisations running on public donations shouldn't be that greedy to take money into their pockets.

Accepted great bike challenge to raise awareness and money for Kids Cancer - Every year from 2018, rode over 1000Km, raised over \$2600, Sugaa and girls are donating their hair every second or third year to make wigs and raising fund too

Founded Committee for Ballaarat North – 2019 (good feeling moment)

Sugaa started volunteering at Ballaarat Information Centre - in 2019

Nivash started volunteering at Ballaarat Information Centre - in 2021

Covid pandemic the world – 2019 to 2022/23

Named as the best neighbour in Victoria – 2020 (The moment a piece of news seized me)

Expired Medicare cards accepted as one of the evidence for asylum seekers – 2020 (self-pat moment)

Our wonderful friend Kath passed away - on 16 December 2020

Nivash, our eldest daughter, started volunteering at Ballarat Information Centre - in 2021 - grade 7 at school

Inaugural Harvest Festival – Garibaldi – January 2021

Mental Health Awareness Walk – Refugee Week 2021, continued 2022, will be in 2023 too

Our Australian-born child had become an Australian Citizen – in October 2022

The rest of us are still waiting for our citizenship.

I am 44 years old on 25 January 2023

Our sports teams

Sugaa and Girls - Western Bulldogs and

Melbourne Vixens

Neil - Richmond Tigers

Sugaa wants to study aged care and work in this field.

I want to be a Police Officer.

Our story will continue .....

**WE WANT PERMANENT VISAS WITH A PATHWAY TO BECOME AUSTRALIAN CITIZENS**

*Continue to next pages to  
Read Nivash's poems, and to look some of our photos*

## Reflections of our story in prose by Nivash

### Chapter **21**

*Written in 2021, read by Lyndell*

Those who come for protection,  
now hiding from detection,  
their children sick with infection,  
with no money for an injection,  
they've started their reflection,  
to add in the collection,  
they all have a connection  
with stories to tell.

Mother stares at her child so dear,  
struggling to feed those she cares,  
stopping for a well earned rest,  
we wish her the best!

A thorny path is the way the tread,  
all for one price a loaf of bread,  
can you believe it,  
wish to deny.

It's happening every where  
They all fought without giving much thought,  
a loud boom  
argh  
screams filled the air then silence.

The boat groans as it sinks.

trying to survive they land where their unwanted

just like flies are important.

Blood drips down daddies chin

dancing before trickling away,

he takes his final breath of the sorrow filled air

before his death,

that's the end of him!

The refugees fled feeling sorry for them

while listening to the distant boos.

Seasons pass as they search for a place to call home.

And that my friends is the end

and the stories to add in the collection

there's many more to come!

**Written in 2022, read by Kartie**

They say cities have 10 million souls  
Theses souls have a key  
Hidden on their path to find  
Freedom  
Education  
Love  
Knowledge  
Safety  
No one told the souls how hard it'll be  
They survived the roughest waves  
And the driest deserts  
just to go find their key for  
Freedom  
Finally escaping 10 years of war  
Their key for Safety  
No more fearing  
No more asking  
When's the next attack  
No more dead kids  
Lying motionless  
In fields of destruction  
On the side of the road  
Let's hear your intention  
What are you going to do

For too long have we lived to believe  
There are 1-96 different people  
Just because there's 1-96 different countries  
Let life be equal  
This ain't illegal  
We live with the gum trees  
For goodness sake

Tiananmen square  
Anti-Iraq war protest  
We fight for them both day and night  
When they finally come  
We chase them away with pitchforks  
Booing,  
telling them to go back  
Have we forgotten we fought for them  
Have we forgotten they fought for us  
Do we remember the times  
We fought together

When life gives you lemons make lemonade  
But this ain't easy for refugees  
Well you see  
There is a man  
The man you see is a refugee  
He came by boat  
He said this year

I hope to vote  
Without fear

Many are like  
Many are not  
Not all refugees are the same  
Some came here to find a job  
Some for safety  
Some for education  
But all by boat  
Just because there's family  
Popular in media  
Without a job  
Without answers  
To their prayers  
Doesn't mean there the only ones

Once again let's be equal  
Don't get caught up in political tantrums  
Come on we know better  
With that in mind let's unite  
And welcome refugees  
The souls who flee



**Written in 2022, read by Nivash**

14 years ago

There was a man  
The man you see is a refugee  
He came by boat  
He said, And I quote  
I hope this year I can vote  
The man you see  
Strongly believes  
world could change for the better  
No more war  
No more conflict  
Lets endeavor  
Find peace within

14 years ago

There was a lady  
Given the chance to flee the war  
To save her child  
Secure her future  
She came to A country  
Of beauty and gold  
With nothing but a loaf of bread  
With a little mold  
On her journey she said

I don't want anyone dead

4 years later there's a family

Full of smiles

Full of love

Hiding their pain

Their fears

Their thoughts

Afraid they'll be sent back

When they were finally safe

Or so they thought

They got a mysterious call

Hello

They whispered,

They cried,

Told to go back

They had no hope

That same year they met a lady

She was their savior

She showed love and kindness

And taught them how to hug

She told them there's still hope

They just had to cope

6 years ago

The man got involved

With giving

Caring

For the community

with the same community

that cared for him

So did the lady who saved her child

Their wish is to one day be able to give back

No lying no hacks

Just by working hard

Look at them now

You'll wonder how

They've lasted 10 years

10 years without healthcare

10 years without a job

10 years without any sort of visa

10 years still waiting on their miracle

No thanks all those support groups

Who secretly tell them to go back

No thanks to those politicians

Who fake it for the news

Thanks their friends

who truly want what's best for them

thanks to their friends friends

for shaping their mind to welcome them

The Family is us

We are the family

We hope you'll join our fight

To support those affected by war

Those who had to flee and weren't welcome

Those who lost their loved ones

those who lost their lives

we respect the survivors of the political tantrums

Please stop tormenting us

Compassion isn't about finding a solution; it's about making a solution

Permanent visas for us will be the one and only treatment to stop mental torture and it is a public interest too.

#Combined50YearsOfWorkingLife

#JusticeForUs

#kids\_need\_peace

#NationalRefugeeWeek

#Broken\_Hearts

#NoMoreRefugeeDeaths

#NewAustralian

#publicInterest

#RefugeesSeekingAsylum

#hometoBallarat

#permanent\_visas\_for\_most

#timeforahome

#pathway\_to\_citizenship\_will\_be\_the\_compensation

#permanent\_visas\_for\_NeilFamily

#refugees2012

**hashtags to  
find my posts on  
Facebook**



Quilt by Sugaa for Homeless people



Sugaa was volunteering at Food Bank



Sugaa did Leadership Victoria

We weren't allowed to learn English but we are learning English from the community and made us feel integrated, made Ballarat Home.

Sugaa is volunteering at Ballarat Health Services (Grampian Health Services) **-Sugaa is in the Brochure-**



Sugaa was volunteering at Ballarat Community Health



Hair donation to make wigs

Hair donation to make wigs

Volunteering as a photographer at community events



Volunteering for Ballarat International Foto Biennale



Sugaa in blue, Nivash beside mum, Kartie behind Sugaa, Nive at the back

A  
little  
note  
to  
say  
a  
big  
**Thank You**

---

**Contact Details:**

Neil Para

Mobile: 0452 533 759

Email: [neil.para@yahoo.com.au](mailto:neil.para@yahoo.com.au)

Facebook: NEIL PARA - an Asylum Seeker

*Can you please put a review on my Facebook page.*





Join Neil Para and his family on their journey full of challenges and hardships to find true smiles.



#Combined50YearsOfWorkingLife  
#JusticeForUs #kids\_need\_peace #NationalRefugeeWeek #Broken\_Hearts  
#NoMoreRefugeeDeaths #NewAustralian #publicInterest  
#RefugeesSeekingAsylum #hometoBallarat #permanent\_visas\_for\_most  
#timeforahome #pathway\_to\_citizenship\_will\_be\_the\_compensation  
#permanent\_visas\_for\_NeilFamily  
#refugees2012