

### Dr Ben Saul

Ben's work for refugees and asylum seekers in the legal field has been highly influential. A university lecturer, researcher and publisher he has been working tirelessly for the past eight years to further refugee causes, including publishing Future Seekers 11 Refugees Irregular Migration in Australia.

### Edward Smith

Edward is the director of Next Level Basketball Australia. He coaches and mentors more than 100 young Sudanese basketball players. He has secured more than \$200,000 in academic scholarships for Sudanese youth. Edward is also director of SAYES a mentoring program that focuses on the creation of positive sporting activities that encourage academic and social achievement. His work has been recognised in major publications such as the Sydney Morning Herald, the Daily Telegraph, Foxtel and Handle Magazine.

### Sr Helen Barnes

For close to 30 years, Sr Helen Barnes has been doing everything and anything to help refugees and asylum seekers. No problem is too large or complex for Sr Helen to tackle. The kindness she has shown to refugees has given hope to all.

# Dario Palermo Refugee Week Art Exhibition



## STARTTS' Inaugural Humanitarian Awards Presentation

First of all, I would like to thank you, on behalf of STARTTS, Friends of STARTTS and Triumphant!, for being here tonight to support the opening of Friends of STARTTS

Dario Palermo Refugee Week Art Exhibition and the Inaugural night of STARTTS Humanitarian Awards Presentation.

One of the things that sustains us in our work, which so often brings us face to face with some of the most horrific aspects of the world we live in, is that it also brings us into contact with some of the most extraordinary people. Working to heal horror, we also see a lot of good.

Tonight is about sharing that perspective and recognizing at least

some of those extraordinary people, both refugees and non-refugees, who continue to inspire us through their deeds.

Luckily, we will need many, many more nights like tonight to recognize all those that deserve to be recognized, which is just as well, since I understand that Friends of STARTTS intends to continue to put on this night as part of Refugee Week for the foreseeable future.

Before I tell you more about tonight and about Dario, I would like to tell you a little bit about STARTTS. (I trust those of you already familiar with STARTTS won't mind too much.)

STARTTS stands for the Service for the Treatment And Rehabilitation of

Torture and Trauma survivors.

We commenced our work in 1988 and provide a state-wide service from Sydney, with offices in Carramar, Auburn, and Liverpool, and from further afield, with offices in Wollongong, Newcastle and Coffs Harbour.

Our mission is to assist people from refugee-type situations, whose lives have been affected by torture and other traumatic events in the context of their refugee experience. To assist them to regain control over their lives.

We do this in many ways, by providing counseling and other psychological interventions, backed by physiotherapy, family therapy and group interventions and through a variety of community development interventions.

We believe that torture and trauma can affect the individual's mind body and spirit, and can also disrupt the family, the social group, the community and society at large.

We have found that working with our clients, at all these levels, is most effective. We also believe that in regaining their enjoyment and control over their lives and their future, survivors obtain the ultimate victory over those who traumatized them. Therefore we see our role as that of working in partnership with individual refugees and refugee communities to achieve this in a way that potentiates their own healing and empowers them.

We work with people of all ages, and increasingly children and young people form a larger section of our client group. We also work with people from all over the world, who speak more than 60 languages and many more dialects.

Through our different programs, we work with new arrivals and people who have been here for decades, regardless of migration status.

Over the years we have assisted well over 10,000 refugees and have participated in special programs such as Operation Safe Haven assisting evacuees from Kosovo and East Timor, and in the training of mental health workers

and later the establishment of a mental health system in East Timor.

We have grown a lot since the small service that employed just five people when STARTTS was established in 1988. We have faced and continue to face many challenges, which we have been able to meet thanks to the commitment and ingenuity of our staff, the inspiration provided by our clients and the support of Friends of STARTTS, both official and unofficial.

And talking about friendship brings me back to Dario, a good friend of mine, and also a great friend of STARTTS, who sadly passed away a few months ago. This event is largely a tribute to Dario, and to the things he was passionate about.

I met Dario shortly after he arrived in Australia, when STARTTS was a very small organization struggling for survival, and for refugee issues. Torture and trauma seemed to be far off the radar for most people, and certainly for most politicians.

Dario had lots of ideas about how art, his lifelong passion, could help STARTTS further the general public's awareness about refugee issues and about the impact of torture and trauma, as well as the needs for services to assist refugees affected by these.

Dario was not only a talented artist, but he was also one of those rare individuals who are able to combine artistic talent and creativity with a talent for motivating and organizing others and make things happen.

This is how STARTTS Refugee Week Art exhibitions took place from 1990 to 1993. They would not have happened without Dario coming up with the idea, motivating other artists to participate and putting in enormous amounts of work and dedication to make it all happen against all odds. Of course, they were a great success.

Dario also helped STARTTS and other organizations such as the Asylum Seekers Centre in many other ways, by conducting sculpture classes for asylum seekers, playing music at public events and donat-

ing to STARTTS the beautiful sculpture that graces STARTTS reception foyer in Carramar and which everyone can see as they visit our head office.

STARTTS owes a lot more to Dario than most people know. Back in the early nineties, when STARTTS desperately needed more funding to address a burgeoning waiting list for services, it was the beauty of Dario's sculptures that first caught the attention of Peter Collins, then Minister for Health and also Minister for the Arts, to the plight of our clients while launching our Refugee Week Arts Exhibition

The Minister ended up buying a couple of sculptures from Dario, but he also developed an interest in the work of STARTTS, which later translated into the funding we so desperately needed.

## We miss Dario a lot

One of the last conversations I had with him was about the possibility of getting the Refugee Week Art Exhibitions going again. He was very keen on the idea, and once again, he seems to have managed to provide the inspiration for this project to come together; motivating his friends, both artists and non-artists, like myself, and the friends of STARTTS, to put together this exhibition.

I trust that the Dario Palermo Refugee Week Exhibition will hopefully become an icon of refugee week for years to come, both honoring and celebrating Dario's memory in the most suitable way I could dream of.

Dario was also a talented musician with a passion for Tango, one of the other things we had in common. Over the last few years he had set himself the task of mastering the bandoneon, an instrument often called the soul of tango. It is therefore a very special pleasure for me to conclude this tribute by introducing his fellow musicians from Cambalache, Jacinta and Justo, who will delight us with a few chosen Tango pieces. ■