

Tuesdays with Naomi at Baabayan

Tuesdays are the busiest days at **Baabayan**. Meaning ‘ancestral women’, this gathering place in Emerton was founded with love and dedication by esteemed **Aboriginal** elders from Western Sydney and opened in 2017.

It was where I went to see Naomi Smith on Tuesday, to meet the staff of Raylene in the front office, attending to many of life’s issues, Theresa, mother of 5 who runs the program for Mums and Bubs and Ruth, the psychologist who is available on two days each week. I witnessed a hum of activity as elders came to chat, enjoy morning tea and lunch. There were also support staff from health and childcare services and a policewoman calling in to say ‘Hello’. I also saw how Naomi very gently navigated her way through endless requests and questions without blinking an eye. The atmosphere was both friendly and welcoming. Later in the afternoon, Naomi would be hosting a homework club!

Many volunteers like Helen in admin and sponsors who donate to Baabayan help to keep it running. It does not receive government grants. Naomi is the integral volunteer coordinator who looks forward to the time when the centre can be managed by a younger group.



L to R: Daisy, Jenny, Naomi, Cheryl and Pat
– part of the Elders group



Anna and Naomi in the gathering space before lunch.

Do you know that Naomi spent 4 years in the Kimberley?

She has lived in the Mount Druitt area for 30 years where she has ministered in the parish, in prisons and in Aboriginal Catholic Ministry before starting in the Baabayan story in 2012.

Naomi was born in Sydney but lived in the country and moved every two years as her Dad was a railway worker.

Thank you, Naomi. No wonder they love you there!

Kerrie Cusack