

SUNBURY

WAITING FOR LIFE CHANGE

PHOTOS PUT REFUGEES IN FOCUS

Natalie Filmer

THESE young men photographed enjoying a day at the pool look like any other group of mates spending time together.

But time is all these friends have as they wait indefinitely, in limbo, to learn their fate.

They are among the countless number of refugees and asylum seekers struggling to create some sort of normality in the foreign islands of Indonesia while awaiting a chance at a better life for themselves and their families.

The image was captured by Melbourne photographer Mike Read (pictured).

"I wanted to show what happens when you stop the boats," Read said.

"There is no doubt that travelling by boat is very dangerous, but if we see that as some sort of victory we lose sight that these people still exist and are still in a hopeless situation because they can't return to their homes where they are persecuted for their ethnicity or religion.

"I'm not under any illusions that I can fix the whole situation, but I



feel a responsibility as a photographer to draw attention to who these people are and how much we are all the same.

"That person you see could very well be your neighbour, your colleague, your friend. I want to bring that conversation to people."

Read's depictions of life in the Indonesian village of Cisarua form the Boundless Plains photographic exhibition on display in the hallways of Sunbury Community Health until July 10.

The 29-year-old will talk about his travels and answer questions about the people he has met as part of Salesian College Rupertswood's Twilight School conversation se-



Mike Read's Sunbury exhibition captures struggling refugees and asylum seekers.

Picture: MIKE READ

ries at the health centre on Thursday.

Twilight School facilitator Bruno Lettieri said he was excited by the collaboration with Sunbury Community Health to engage the wider community to discuss big issues.

"I love the idea of the Twilight School travelling to other places," Mr Lettieri said.

"I'll be asking, 'How does art help us deal with this very important social issue? Can it provoke? Does it make us ask questions?'"

Sunbury Community Health executive manager Bernadette Hetherington said both organisations had similar visions for building community and plans for three more joint events later this year.

"Mike's direct experience with asylum seekers in Indonesia will provide the perfect subject for Bruno's animated and engaging style of conversing he is so well known for," Ms Hetherington said.

"The title for his exhibition, Boundless Plains, lends itself well

to a local community conversation about how we are or are not sharing.

"It reminds us of the Australian anthem words, 'For those who've come across the seas, we've boundless plains to share; with courage let us all combine'."

Boundless Plains will be on display in Sunbury Community Health's community gallery.

The conversation is from 6-8pm on Thursday, 12-28 Macedon St.

Bookings: boundlessplainsunbury.eventbrite.com