

CONFERENCE REPORT

POLITICS AND PROTEST: THE FIGHT FOR REFUGEE RIGHTS

Australian Refugee Action Network (ARAN) Conference 2018

The conference was held on Saturday 7th & Sunday 8th July in Melbourne at the Australian Midwifery and Nursing Federation (ANMF) Building. ARAN would like to thank the ANMF for providing venue and technical support for the conference.

The conference was attended by 150 people from 45 grassroots refugee rights groups from across Australia.

Day 1 Saturday 7 July

Corinne Grant, Human rights advocate, lawyer, media personality and comedian, welcomed everyone to the conference and acknowledged the traditional owners, the people of the Kulin Nations.

Session1:

OPENING ADDRESS:

Julian Burnside, AO

QC, human rights and refugee advocate, and documentary maker ([Border Politics](#)) spoke about the effects on our society of adopting ideas that reject humanity and undermine democracy. **What kind of country is Australia becoming? What do we want to be?** See the video here: [Julian Burnside's opening address](#)



Key points – General Assembly of the United Nations adopted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and Australia was a key player in supporting this. The Tampa in August 2001 was a key turning point in Australia refusing the right to seek asylum, and establishing the punitive system of offshore detention, as deterrence to others. This is fundamentally a violation of human rights. When it was suggested that people should be brought from offshore, Peter Dutton recently stated that a single act of compassion could undo the ‘success of the last 5 years’ – it would have been unthinkable in the past that an Australian politician could say this without censure. We have laws that allow innocent people to be locked up – or be held offshore – indefinitely. The time is right to push for change. Border Politics – very positive responses across the country –people are changing their minds. Kenneth Roth – Executive Director of Human Rights Watch –considers the Australian approach as despicable. We need to bring the country back to a position of Don’t be silenced. See a short summary of the address at

The presentation was followed by audience questions and discussion

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Session 2:

PANEL DISCUSSION:

The political context and challenges for the campaign for refugee rights

See the video of panel presenters here

(https://vimeo.com/288486907?utm_source=email&utm_medium=vimeo-cliptranscode-201504&utm_campaign=28749)



FATHER ROD BOWER – Gosford Anglican Church – Constraints on civil liberties and right to protest

The Venerable Rod Bower is an Anglican priest, Rector of Gosford where he has served for 19 years and Archdeacon for Justice Ministries and Chaplaincy in the Diocese of Newcastle. He is an ambassador for the Refugee Council of Australia and serves on the board of the Samaritans Foundation.

Fr. Rod is a passionate advocate for a number of social justice and human rights issues, including marriage equality. He

believes that our treatment of Asylum Seekers, the lack of action on climate change and the failure to adequately recognize First Nations people damages our corporate soul.

It has been said the he takes “a hard line on compassion”, he is committed to building social and cultural capital and contributing to the evolution of an Australia where there is respect, peace and harmony. Fr. Rod is married to Kerry, also a passionate advocate for Asylum Seekers; they have two married children and three grandchildren.

Fr. Rod received the 2016 Doha International Award for Interfaith Dialogue and was recently named Abyssinian of the year by the Muslim Community.

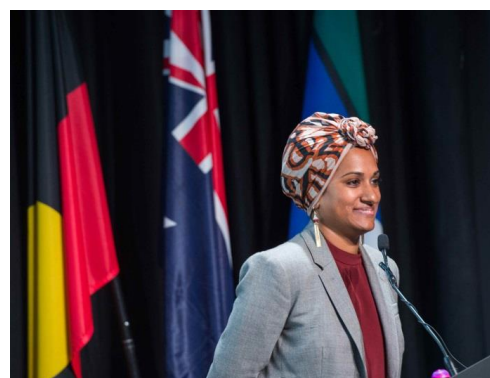
Father Rod spoke about the creeping infringement of our rights and freedom to protest. As the only country that does not have a Bill of Rights. UN Special Rapporteur recently said he is ‘astounded to observe the erosion of rights and the processes which the Australian Government has put in place.

NSW recently passed legislation which would stop people from gathering to protest, and could imprison if refuse to disperse. The Fixed Persons Act gives the government powers to prosecute protesters.

We need to be watchful and mobilise around the erosion of rights – we need to campaign for a Bill of Rights.

SHEN NARAYANASAMY - Human Rights Campaign Director GetUp!

Shifting the narrative, and the broader context of multiculturalism. *Shen Narayanasamy is a human rights expert and former lawyer who has worked in Australia and*



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across the Asia-Pacific on issues of economic justice and land rights. She leads the No Business in Abuse campaign which targets corporate involvement in mandatory detention of asylum seekers, and #LetThemStay which aims to prevent the deportation of hundreds of asylum seekers to Nauru. Shen has travelled extensively with Oxfam to conflict zones such as Sri Lanka as well as with Tanzania's Lawyers Environmental Action Team involved assisting communities who were in confrontation with authorities.

We have been taken in by the government's rhetoric on refugees and migrants. There is a wholesale shift towards migrants in this country – 25% of people in this country are from migrant background. We could be demanding rights for people, no matter where they come from, about how they can be part of this community. 'Join hands with the migrant communities in your communities, and start the conversation on fairness and equity for everyone that comes to Australia..... we need to take down all the structures that penalise and criminalise people of colour, and that divide us in this country.'



EMMANUEL KONDOK, NSW Community of South Sudanese and Other Marginalised Areas group (CSSOMA) and Southern Hope Community Organisation and former refugee.

Emmanuel is a leader in the African community organisations which support recently arrived refugees.

He is the CEO at Southern Hope Community Organisation, and President of the Community of South Sudanese and Other Marginalised Areas group. Formerly a refugee from South Sudan, Emmanuel fully understands the challenges facing African communities,

especially for young people who find it difficult to gain a foot hold in our community.

Emmanuel was very involved in dealing with media and negotiating with politicians earlier this year during the media frenzy around "African gangs". Emmanuel balances family commitments with his many community responsibilities, and is a member of the ARAN Committee.

Emmanuel spoke about the 3.3m people from South Sudan who are displaced, and that many of these people live in the Kakuma Refugee Camp in Kenya. See YouTube clip here :

https://youtu.be/P0Xm41ABV_c (per Christian Bashimbe)

The Australian Government has generally supported the resettlement of refugees from South Sudan, but the recent media campaign has been unhelpful.

Emmanuel stressed that there is a lot of goodwill in the Australian community, illustrating this with the Cross cultural wedding earlier this year with 400 people- a good example of how we can all be together and respect each other. South Sudanese young people here are Australian young people. Some young people are traumatised. We are all Australians together, and we need to work together to bring about the changes we want to see.

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DR JOHN MINNS – The refugee issue in domestic politics

Dr John Minns teaches in International Relations and Politics at the ANU. He is a member of the Steering Committee of the Canberra Refugee Action Committee and has been involved in the campaign for refugee rights for over 20 years. John was an instigator for the formation of the Australian Refugee Action Network and has been an active member of the ARAN Committee.



It's been a long fight – since 1992 when mandatory detention was introduced....since then Australian policy on refugees has become worse – the worst in the world. We might ask sometimes ourselves, can we make change? But, we must keep going. We have an international obligation to fight the policies. We need to challenge the 'othering' of 'outsiders'. This scapegoating of other groups (e.g. the African young people) is exploited for political purposes, to distract people for other issues. Things we have learned – we need a broad and diverse movement drawn from all sections of society – it has to be tolerant of groups doing different things – it has to be activist. If it that we can intervene at moments to create a policy that is humane, sane, and a policy that we can be proud of.

The panel discussion was followed by audience questions and discussion

Video – Panel responds to audience questions - <https://vimeo.com/280483175> (0 – 10.25minutes)



L-R: Julian Burnside, Shen Narayanasamy, Dr John Minns, Corinne Grant, Emmanuel Kondok, Father Rod Bowers

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Session 3:

FOCUSSING THE CAMPAIGN FOR REFUGEE RIGHTS

a. CAMPAIGN PRIORITY ISSUES:

Pamela Curr and Jan Govett presented the key campaign issues agreed at the inaugural ARAN conference in May 2017:

- No mandatory detention
- End offshore processing
- A more generous intake
- Fair processing
- Access to work, support and permanent residency
- Family reunions
- Safe passage
- No boat turn-backs
- Increase refugee intake

Additional issues raised on the day:

- Change the political narrative
- Let them go (from Manus and Nauru) - Bring them here
- Regional co-operation protection of refugees and people seeking asylum
- Reinstate the SRSS (income and housing support for people on bridging visas)
- Challenge Australian support for detention in transit countries
- Challenge Australian support for regimes in source countries
- Access to legal services, and medical services
- Increase intake of stateless people

b. World café group discussions:

SEIZING THE MOMENT – RESPONDING TO ISSUES

[Video of feedback from World Café discussions](#) (from 10.25minutes onwards)

<https://vimeo.com/280483175>



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Winning hearts and minds

How do we get people to care about the issue? Ideas for building the movement

- Reframe the narrative on our terms
 - Point out the lack of logic
 - Positive messages – HOPE
 - Change language – compassion, fairness, respect, safety
 - Initiate ‘conversations’ (see ASRC resources #Right Track)
- Letters to newspapers that touch people’s hearts
- Broadening the debate – e.g. newspaper opinion pieces
- Counter divisive commentary, and challenge myths – changing the message of blame – show the illegality of current policies
- Organise refugee speakers for community groups
- Different messages for different audiences – listen to and engage with people who with different views
- Keep it simple, rather than lots of facts use things that people can relate to
- New and creative ways of telling the story
- Photographs are powerful
- ‘Cottage’ meetings – table conversations over food
- Bring people together – local people, refugees and people seeking asylum - support personal encounters and opportunities to mix socially
- Schools – sharing stories – so the next generations understand the need for compassion – influence the curriculum
- Spread the word of resistance – voices of people seeking asylum
- Defiant actions – large mobilisations – draw attention to the issues and inspire people to take action – snap actions, rallies
- Visibility in public spaces and in professional sectors - be seen and engage
 - Encourage AFL to have a ‘Human rights’ round
 - Get celebrities on side
 - Engage with media:
 - Write letters to mainstream media
 - Suggest screening documentaries on TV
- Organise public forums where people with lived experience speak
- Strengthen links to other social justice campaigns

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Hearing the voices of people with lived experience

What do we need to do?

- We need to amplify the voices of people on Manus and Nauru who are resisting and speaking out – use social media to share
- Invite people with lived experience to speak - important to ensure that people feel safe to speak out
 - Consult and plan with people for the presentation
 - be aware of trauma triggers - Consider vulnerability
 - current visa situation e.g. bridging visas, SRSS (if a very public forum better to invite people who have citizenship)
 - use live video connection with people in detention etc if they are willing
- RCOA /RCAN – ‘Living Book’ program –speakers from refugee background for events
- ASRC are work ring with people with lived experience to build presentation skills (Advocacy and Power Program)
- Public education programs – schools and community groups (and suggest actions)
- If visa status unresolved people may be happy to have aspects of their stories shared (and direct quotes) , but with changed names etc
- Visit politicians with people with lived experience, and have them take the lead (ensure safety)
- Screening of documentaries e.g. Freedom Stories, Journey Beyond Fear, Staging Post, Chauka Tell Us the Time etc and host Q & A session
- Using social media to get messages across
- Sharing cultural events, dance, etc (e.g. culture vision social enterprise)
- Meeting over food (Tamil Feast, Welcome dinners,)
- Live performance and traditional dress fashion show ‘ Women’s Business’
- Recognition Awards for achievement
- Involve in decision making
- Deliberate, targeted employment
- Advocates can speak for those who can’t
- Empowering former refugees is ‘the way to go’!



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Influencing politicians and decision makers

What approaches work well?

- Be strategic – link to local and national advocacy strategies/campaigns
- Develop local alliances, including people from refugee backgrounds
- Put pressure on politicians by mobilising refugee supporters to take a stand for refugee rights
- Rally / picket your local politician's office
- Steady stream of 'please explain' letters (letter writing groups) - e.g. Julian Burnside approach of asking specific questions, and persevering
- Write to your MP often, and copy to other all other federal MPs
- Ask politicians if they support human rights
- Ask your MP to support the Wilke Refugee Protection Bill (in process) If not, why not? Tell them you will consider this when you vote at the Federal election.
- Ask your local MP to put a question in writing to the Minister, and request an answer within 60 days.

Influencing ALP

- Target ALP politicians, candidates and delegates to the ALP conference
- Work with Labor4Refugees and unions to widen cracks within the ALP
 - e.g. on issues such as SRSS Cuts, SHEV visas,
 - Demand that refugee policies are debated at the ALP conference in December

Electorate based approaches:

- Be a presence in their electorates – and target marginal electorates to promote the issue there
- Strategic analysis of each electorate, demographics, target and change votes
- Create a scoresheet on different party policies – in the lead up to the election – e.g. CRAG election strategy
- Join GetUp phone campaign to call voters in Dutton's election
- Structured conversations in marginal electorates
- Call for a Royal Commission
- Pressure from non-Coalition politicians (MPs & Senators) to condemn Dutton for overseeing law breaking by Border Force and Dept of Immigration (criminal offences under the Work Health and Safety Act)
- Write to every member of the UN Human Rights Council
- Protest on the world stage – NEW York, Geneva etc – send advocates, including Grandmothers to raise the issues in these places
- Tweet Radio national when senior politicians are being interviewed, and ask about refugee policy
- Pressure those groups /unions/businesses which support the current policies – e.g. Picket CFMEU offices, business donors etc
- Screen documentaries with Q&A sessions at Parliament House

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- Civil disobedience will eventually become the only option (e.g. How can the Grandmothers get arrested when protesting? (to draw attention to the issue)



Effective 'quick responses to announcements and developments

What has worked well?

- ARAN to notify member groups of key policy developments more often and more quickly
- Emergency text tress for urgent actions
- Calling for snap actions where necessary
- Need to have reliable sources of info to inform decision about whether to call snap

actions

- Having processes in place to make quick decisions to write press releases
- Train members to retweet and share on Facebook
- Database with media contacts – especially those journalists who will assist
- Local groups use messaging that appeals to local community
- Local groups develop relationships with local journalists to get local coverage of issues and actions
- Social media strategy with agreed hashtags and slogans
- Important to have ongoing campaigns – not only being reactive

How can ARAN support the campaign efforts of member groups?

- Provide a spokesperson (who becomes known) to give quick response to issues raised , announcements from MPs etc
- Encourage participation by young people and support youth voice (even though they can't yet vote)
- Do surveys of refugee groups so that ARAN can say ..."% of our group thinks...."
- Lobby influential people/organisations to support the cause, which will assist local groups in educating about the issues.
- Have a list of speakers who can be approached to speak on relevant issues
- Help connect local groups to 'former refugee' communities – empower and partner with these groups
- Keep us informed about the activities of other groups so we can see how we can co-operate.
- Advertise films/events etc to all member groups (maybe expand and promote the Billboard)



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- Co-ordinate national campaigns/ targeted campaigns - better advertising of National Days of Action
 - including social media – use paid promotions
- Provide monthly update of onshore and offshore detention, and movement to US
- Provide information to groups to support their campaign efforts, including things like not using people's names ...
- Help local groups find professional (or specific) support as needed.
- Raise funding for big billboards – use professionals to assist with the right wording
- Access to database of media contacts
- National contact point for people enquiring about refugee issues & campaigns
- Search function on ARAN website so people can find local groups (see example – ACTU website)

Lunch was catered by the Asylum Seeker Resource Centre – Good food and networking

Session 3:

WORKSHOPS: SHARING SUCCESSES AND SKILLS

Protest action and vigils

Facilitator: John Minns (Canberra RAC)

Presenters: Chris Breen (RAC Vic), Alison/Trevor (Adelaide Vigil), Kerry Phillips (Palm Sunday committee, Vic)

Presentations

Planning for Palm Sunday Walk - Kerry Phillips

[Adelaide vigil group discussion](#) (provided as video clip)

Notes from session:

What is success?

- Attracting attention
- Peaceful protest
- Getting big numbers
- Attracting new people to join the cause
- People feeling optimistic after the event
- Media coverage

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What factors contribute to success?

- Publicity
- Clear focus
- Not too many speeches
- Clear message
- Preparation
- Creative approaches - vary the approach/format
- Get young people involved
- Good sound system !

What are the challenges?

- Fear of confrontation
- Media disinterest
- Lack of preparation – not enough people ‘spreading the word ‘ in the lead up

Lobbying politicians and letter-writing

Facilitator: Sr Brigid Arthur

Presenters: Clare Forbes, Linda Cusworth

Presentations

[Lobbying & letter writing workshop - Linda Cusworth](#)

[Meeting with MPs - Linda Cusworth](#)

[Tips for Writing Letters to Newspapers -Linda Cusworth](#)

[Tips for Writing to Politicians -Linda Cusworth](#)

Notes from session:

What key factors contribute to the success of writing letters and lobbying politicians

- Short and clear
- Focus on 1 or 2 issues
- Make a reference to something personal
- Keep it respectful
- Ask a question or two
- Snail mail has impact
- Email for urgent measures
- Always email individually
- Put in your address
- Write to say thanks

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- (even birthday cards – children up to 5 years have been in detention and never received a card.)
- Letter to Editor – Topical and current; sign it

What are 3 key challenges or barriers to success in writing letters and lobbying politicians?

- Be clear about your meeting
- Use any 'ins' you have
- Be persistent; Be polite
- Select your team – keep it small; Select 1 or 2 key issues
- Keep focus on the people affected by policy
- Have a specific ask
- Identify a benefit or an MP
- Send a 'Thank-you' email.

Any other important points from your discussion

- Two sorts of letters – for papers and for MP's. VOLUME of letters is what's important
- Try and act together – get volume of letters. (Don't be 'lone Rangers!')
- Make use of social gatherings for letter writing
- Be tactical: know what you want to achieve
- Don't be unnerved in presence of MP's
- Be punctual – don't expect answers or positive responses
- Target marginal seats (Can be affecting a lot of people)
- Be creative in letters. Use humour and irony to purpose)
- Don't forget thanks and acknowledgement

How We Know We're Successful:

1. Finding allies (MP's/Senators)
2. If he/she agreed to put questions on notice – have they done it?
3. Being able to tell polities about influential people (big influential lobby groups or other groups) who agree with you.

Letters To Editor

Referring to something in earlier paper. Letter writing groups/something social where you all write together. Get in early with letter to paper before 10 a.m.

Key Challenges in Lobbying

1. People being scared or intimidated – afraid to make approach
2. Pre-planning but not being thrown if you've got a fact wrong
3. Getting your letter noticed
4. Not being put off track
5. Countering - "it doesn't work". Polities might say it won't matter how many write but evidence is it does matter.

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Important Points

1. Building relationships with members and staff
2. Ringing as well as writing – very valuable
3. Sending a 'thank you'
4. Remember a polle is a human with a family
5. If you ask a polle to put a question on notice to a minister it must be put within 60 days
6. Important to write to papers nationally
7. All the items on Linda's T-shirt
8. Knowing marginal seats

Raising community awareness – changing attitudes

Facilitator: Lili Calitz (Tasmania Refugee Network, Amnesty)

Presenters:

- Gayle Carr, Semele Costello (Asylum Seeker Resource Centre)
- Burhan Zangana (RCAN)
- Muzafar & Khalim (The Staging Post)
- Barbara Jackson (Montmorency Asylum Seeker Support Group)

Asylum Seeker Resource Centre

#RightTrack is a community-led movement of people having powerful conversations and taking local action to shift community attitudes and advocate for safety, fairness and freedom for people seeking asylum, resourced by the ASRC. See more information here: [#RightTrack](#)

Burhan Zangana (RCAN)

The Refugee Communities Advocacy Network (RCAN) is a network for people from refugee backgrounds to gather to discuss, prioritise and advocate on local, state, national and international issues of greatest concern to them.

[info about RCAN](#)

Burhan spoke about his experience as a

participant in the Living Books community education initiative which provides the opportunity for members of the community to 'borrow' a living book, and sit down with the person and hear their



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story – in this way Burhan has shared his story many times and changed people's preconceptions about refugees.

Muzafar Ali & Khalim Dai (Documentary: The Staging Post) <https://www.thestagingpost.com.au/>

The Staging Post follows two Afghan Hazara refugees, Muzafar and Khadim. Stuck in Indonesia after Australia 'stopped the boats' and facing many years in limbo, they built a community and started the school which inspired a refugee education revolution. A real-life, real-time, multi-platform documentary. The Staging Post is about friendship, connection and the power of community.

Muzafar Ali

"Rumi says 'Where there are ruins, there is a chance to find treasures.' When we became refugees, we found those treasures. We couldn't expect to have met the people we did and had the opportunities that we have had."

"The school acted like a magnet. It connected us with many people. They were waiting for refugees to do something, and then they accompanied us."

"I live in Australia now. We have been welcomed in Australia and are very happy here. My mother says she is having the best days of her life. My wife has nearly finished 2nd year university, and my daughter is happy making friends at school."

"I have been invited to visit and speak at towns and cities all over Australia. I'm humbled to see how people are interested to learn more about refugees and our experiences. I feel lucky to have met so many compassionate and remarkable Australians."

"The Staging Post has given me the opportunity to tell my story and my people's story."

Khadim Dai

"Australia is very close to my heart. I have so many friends there, and also my family. I always thought I was going to live there and used to watch Australian TV shows in Quetta when I was young. But now I feel like my home is in the United States. They welcomed me and I have lots of opportunity here."

"So I have mixed feelings. I'm happy to come and see my friends and family, but I'm sad that don't belong to Australia like I thought I would."

"When I met Muzafar I couldn't even write an email. Filming The Staging Post, and my life as a refugee, was a journey of learning. It opened doors for me and now I'm working in Hollywood."

Montmorency Asylum Seeker Support Group – sustaining our local group since 2003.

I feel very proud to belong to the Montmorency Asylum Seeker Support Group which started way back in 2003. That is a pretty long time for a small suburban community group. When the group started all those years ago, it was to collect food and raise funds for the Asylum Seeker Resource Centre, the ASRC. The founders never thought for a moment that they would still need to be supporting people seeking asylum 15 years later.

Over the years, we have learnt 'on the job' how to do what we do.... And that is to

Firstly - Engage with the community around us to increase their awareness about the issues facing people seeking asylum, and hopefully to touch their hearts and change their attitudes.

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Secondly - Raise funds for the ASRC, Refugee Legal as well as our friends who are seeking asylum here in Australia.

Thirdly - network! -with the peak organisations (RAR, ARAN, etc) with local Council, with church groups. - giving our little group a big reach

The main way we engage with people in the community is through events.

The longest standing event we have is our Annual Luncheon with well-known guest speakers such as Sister Bridgid, Kon from the ASRC, David Manne from Refugee Legal and this year Gillian Triggs. Although we hold this luncheon way out in Hurstbridge, we are booked to capacity every year.

In the past year, we had a very successful event in Montmorency with Julian Burnside who shared the stage with the wonderful Syrian brothers Omar and Said Al Kassab and a lovely young woman Kobra Moradi, a Hazara law student at Latrobe. We had a capacity audience of more than 400 people at this event.

At a smaller but very successful event a few months later John Gulzari was our guest speaker. This event was to celebrate the 3 International Radio Program awards given to the podcast The Messenger produced by Behind the Wire.

As we prepared for these events and others that we have held, one of the important lessons we have learned is to hone in on what we want to achieve through the event. Is it to:

- Raise funds?
- Educate people in general?
- Raise awareness of particular aspects of the issues?
- Recruit volunteers?
- Encourage our supporters to be active?

By focussing on each aspect, it helped us to manage the event to achieve the outcomes we wanted.

Sometimes our main purpose is simply fund raising. Like our Heidelberg Theatre nights or the Mammoth Garage sale we had a couple of years back. These 'fun' events reach people who are not necessarily supporters and they are very worthwhile in that regard.

Connecting to local people who haven't heard about us before is an ongoing aim. In the past couple of years, we've set up a display at the local shops with other community groups during Volunteer week. This has helped us to recruit new members.

The group put some thought into how to attract passer-by's to the stall. Philomena had the brainwave of selling enticing tiny treasures such as jewellery, small scale textiles, ornaments and plants. People spotted this treasure and came over to see more. Bingo! This gave our team an opportunity to have an informal chat. Nice.

We offered people choices in how they could contribute – they could provide food, sign a petition or donate money.

Underpinning our events are the variety of ways in which we connect with community:

1. We have monthly meetings that are open to anyone. We frequently invite guest speakers which gives added incentive for people to attend
2. Our website is regularly updated by our convenor Lyn Richards who
3. Puts together a fantastic newsletter with links to further information and action people can take.

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4. We have a comprehensive contact list which includes many local groups, schools and churches in Banyule and Nillumbik local government areas.

'Welcome to Eltham' is a great asset on our list with their 8000 contacts.

In all, we estimate that when we send out publicity through emails, to many newsletters, posts put on Facebook, we are connecting with more than 20,000 people. It is awesome and shows that being dedicated to building a contact list really pays off.

How do we measure our success?

As you know, this is a tricky issue. But we would like to point to three things that indicate we are on the right track.

1. Our longevity. The MASSG is 15 years old and that is an amazing achievement by the founders and all the members and supporters who have followed in their footsteps.
2. The numbers we attract. We have capacity audiences at our lunches and speaking events and we are able to attract people to smaller, informative events as well.
3. The amount of money we raise. In the early days, we raised modest sums of money as well as collecting food for the ASRC. We also collected warm clothing and bedding for winter. Now, we have had to apply for charity status as we are raising over \$10,000 per year.

Challenges – our two continuing challenges are connecting with young people and getting publicity into the mainstream media.

We're getting quite excited because we have made a contact in the local secondary college which we hope will turn into an event for next year's Refugee Week.

And we carry on trying to get articles in the Leader newspaper. They are very effective when we can....

In summary, I think the three main things we have done well are:

- Remaining focussed
- Building a great contact list
- Increasing awareness and changing attitudes through events

And in the process, we have met and made friends with wonderful people.

Barbara Jackson On behalf of the Montmorency Asylum Seeker Support Group

Additional notes from session:

What is success?

- People understand the issues and are motivated to support the push for change

What factors contribute to success?

- Good networking
- Regular events
- Visibility
- Promoting activities in public places

What are the challenges?

- Reaching beyond your own networks

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Creative activism and social media

Facilitator: Pamela Curr

Presenter: Nicola Paris

[Creative Activism Workshop - Nicola Paris, CounterAct](#)

Campaign planning

Facilitator: Elizabeth Lang

Presenter: Samuel Dariol

Presentation:

[Tools for the Campaign Planning Toolkit - Samuel Dariol](#)

Notes from session:

What is success?

- Getting the desired outcomes
- Key decision-makers bring about policy change

What factors contribute to success?

- Clear focus
- Planning and being organised in approach to campaign
- Power mapping – who can make the change?
- Being aware of the broader context
- Evaluating methods

What are the challenges?

- Fatigue
- Difficulty getting media
- No real voice of opposition (from other political party)
- Being unable to mobilise people/supporters

Media strategies

Facilitator & presenter: Wes Cusworth

Presentation:

[Attracting Media to Your Events – Wes Cusworth](#)

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POLITICS AND PROTEST: THE FIGHT FOR REFUGEE RIGHTS

Australian Refugee Action Network (ARAN) Conference 2018

Sharing your story to influence others

Facilitator & Presenter: Zaki Haidari

Presenters: Tzitia Yohannes, Dure deWinter, (Centre for Multicultural Youth)

Notes from session:

What is “success”?

- Success in our workshop was defined as if we can change one person’s perception towards refugee to think positive and welcome we think we have changed hundreds. Saying that we cant change everyone’s thoughts.

Success factors

- Sharing true stories and invite refugee speakers to the events, which is more powerful and touching and put a face to the story.
- Humanise the issue rather than putting numbers and money.
- Running cultural workshop at schools to build confident in young refugees and also break the barrier.

Key challenges

- It is hard for refugees to speak publicly until they are citizen or even then they are scared to not get in trouble by the Department of Immigration.
- The negative media attention on refugees, as an example if one person is doing something wrong the whole community will be blamed. It is hard to explain that it is only that person and he/she is not representing all refugees.

Other important points from the discussion

- Sharing success stories from refugees in Australia, to show that people are don’t come to Australia for the social benefits as it is publicise on media. Also noting that all refugees are successful, it may take a lot of time for them to get on their feet.
- Cultural workshops at schools - build confident for young refugees at school and engage the school students to make friends.
- Some of the refugees are not feeling safe to tell their colleagues or friends that they are coming from a refugee background - it is because they don’t feel safe and not knowing how people will react. We had a great conversation on how to open up the topic and start to sharing about your experience on a safe environment also it is about the presentation of yourself.

Building your group/network

Facilitator: Niko Leka

Presenters: Jan Govett, Dulce Munz, Rosalind Byass, Geraldine Moore and Judy Carroll

Presentations:

Establishing and Building Activist Groups - Jan Govett, RAR

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[Building Your Network Using Social Media – Mums4Refugees](#)

Ros Byass – Grampians Gariwerd Rural Australians for Refugees (text of presentation)

One thing that I feel is important is that the parameters set at our inaugural meeting of Grampians Gariwerd RAR

- No Party Political or specific religious group allegiance are considered (by most) as the reason for our group's survival/success. Being non-aligned in traditionally conservative districts does mean that we can be inclusive; however there are many things that need to be considered as our group moves forward.
- Local council in Ararat supported a Muslim feast – the Catholic church got donations for Muslim mosque. Inclusive not party political. Julian Burnside was guest speaker -150 people standing room only
- "find your strength as you go" and also think of planning for a successor

Jan Govett, RAR - a few key points (see link to presentation above)

- Encourage communities to form new groups- starts at kitchen table with shared concerns about government policies
- Type of group/ membership
- Plan different types of events e.g. quiet vigils, loud protests, larger public events/speakers
- Make sure you get phone numbers, as well as emails, and follow up after the event
- 1:1 conversations over food very effective in change
- Find out who is interested in doing what
 - if they feel useful they will come
 - if they feel not needed, will drift away (!!)



Aireys Inlet RAR group - subdivide into many separate task groups

BRASA-(Bayside Refugee Advocacy and Support Association) Geraldine/Judy

- have developed a manual on essentials on how the group operates
- visiting MITA (detention centre) - more difficult now with restrictions on visiting - how to challenge?
- Being out there, having a go, don't underestimate support
- Asked local Bayside Council to become a Refugee Welcome Zone - even though it is a conservative council it unanimously

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Geelong CRAG (Combined Refugee Action Group) –

- Has task groups on different issues/activities
- Looking to engage refugees more in planning
- comparing election policies “its about Policies not Parties”
- Geelong Youth for Refugees go out to Uni, Rotary, family days

Wodonga RAR group - Christian spoke about meetings at community centre, and work on transport, drivers' licences,

General comments

- Value of T shirts to identify your group
- Start small with a good friend
- Build slowly
- Organise events – get phone numbers and emails- and follow-up event in a few weeks
- Managing personalities- can be a challenge !
- Innovative fun ideas bring people together,
- Network though groups with a common interest - e.g. #Librarians for Refugees
- Online networking- Mums4Refugees- - have built a huge network online - Facebook, Twitter Instagram

NETWORKING DISCUSSIONS

Unions

Facilitator: Liam Ward

Presenters: Arian McVeigh (Unions ACT), Tim Dymond (WA unions) Taqi Khan (AWU), Bobby Kuriakose (ANMF – Vic)



- migrant workers
- Refugee rights are union rights

- Importance of rank and file involvement – e.g. contingents at rallies, solidarity photos, indications of support ‘in every workplace’ . Delegate lead action in the work place is valuable.
- Statements from union leaders – e.g. Public comments, policy and resolutions
 - ‘An injury to one is an injury to all’ - important to combat the oppression and exploitation of

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- ALP needs to also change policy.
- Health and Safety – Comcare has not acted on apparent serial offending be not ensuring health and safety in detention centres.

Students

Facilitator: Liz Walsh
(RAC-Vic)

Presenters: Anna
Dennis (Canberra
RAC) , Nyah Shabab –
Melbourne Youth for
Refugees , Amber
Wraith and Hersha
Kadkol (National
Union of Students)



Key points from the presentations:

- Importance of being active, and holding people's interest and involvement
- Students can often be easily pulled into activism – though pressures on students to work etc can limit their time
- Social media is an effective way to build networks

Benefits from networking with other student/campus groups

- Co-ordinated actions might be more effective
- Students can help to shift public opinion , and play a leading role in campaigns

Making networks effective

- Having core people who are motivated and active
- Finding small projects to work on in the down time
- Jumping on opportunities – on-campus events etc.

How could ARAN support student groups?

- Could share on FB etc on what various groups are doing

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Activism through Faith Networks

Facilitator: Rev. Alex Sangster

Presenters: Fr Rod Bower, Caz Coleman,
Glenn Jessop, Abi Bannon and Rev.
Roberta Hamilton

Presentation

[Catholic Alliance for People Seeking
Asylum - Glenn Jessop](#)



LGBTI/Rainbow activists

Facilitators/Presenters: Meg Clark and Anne-Marie Delahunt

No notes available

CONFERENCE DINNER – Tamil Feast

Sunday 8 July

REPORT FROM THE ARAN COMMITTEE

Verbal report provided by Committee member Marie Hapke.

[Report from ARAN National Committee June 2018](#)

REVIEW KEY OBJECTIVES OF ARAN

The key objectives are set out in the Terms of Reference – see [Here](#)

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POLITICS AND PROTEST: THE FIGHT FOR REFUGEE RIGHTS

Australian Refugee Action Network (ARAN) Conference 2018

WORKSHOP DISCUSSIONS: CREATIVE STRATEGIES FOR ARAN

BUILDING NETWORKS – What role can ARAN play ? e.g. Unions, Faith Communities, Student and Campus Groups, Rainbow, etc.

- ARAN as a door to other groups – links to ARAN on website
- ARAN sharing / promoting networks via social media
- Pushing for student unions and student councils to pass pro-refugee motions, call events – promote on social media when motions have been passed
- Using RAR model for urban groups – working together to establish this
- Create connections with advocacy agencies
- Create connections between LGBTQI human rights groups and refugee human rights groups, and link these with students
- Unions: Have draft model motions on ARAN websites for union members to bring forth in their union meetings
- Expand and continue with “No Pride in Detention” – e.g. contingents at pride, etc.
- ARAN share examples of unions support refugees
 - When unionists attend rallies
 - When unionists take action / photos at work
- ARAN contact various FB groups to promote July 19/21 rally
 - Refugees, LGBTQI, youth, cultural, unions
- Make links via social media and email with faith / language-based leaders to provide information about refugees and ethnic associations to constituents
- Provide contact information based on towns, suburbs and regions
 - List of networks already existing

ARAN CALLS FOR ACTION

- **July 21 Rally**
- Information sharing:
 - Social media
 - Groups to email into ARAN
- Convergence on Canberra?
 - If change of government
- Conference to endorse resolutions – e.g. Health of Detainees
- Creative action for high profile group (e.g. Knitting Nannas) at Canberra (parliament)
 - Other groups join sit-in
 - Media coverage
- Timetable

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Australian Refugee Action Network (ARAN) Conference 2018

- Lead up to ALP Conference
- Lead up to Election
- Significant Days (Palm Sunday, July 19, Mothers' Day)
- Resource Sharing for actions
 - Flyers, Posters, etc.
- ARAN as National Clearing House for ideas and resources
- Media release templates
- Closed Facebook Group - for networking for national actions and local level (group reps)
- Urgent call outs / snap responses for blockades and actions (responses to deportation, etc.)
- Petitions for tabling in Parliament
- Responses to proposed legislation
 - Team for monitoring, interpreting
 - Planning strategy
 - Provide dot points for
 - Submissions to Senate committees
 - Letters
 - Lobbying
- Crowd funding for particular purpose

RAPID RESPONSES TO ISSUES / SITUATIONS / EVENTS

- 2 or 3 ARAN Committee members tasked with developing / handling quick response
 - Encourage ARAN member groups to develop their own Rapid Response
- Structure for Quick Response:
 - Check facts
 - Check authorisation (e.g. use of images)
 - Notify ARAN member groups nationally
 - **Email: Subject Line: RAPID RESPONSE: CALL TO ACTION**
 - Share information / facts / action with ARAN member groups calling for action
 - ARAN member groups can respond (or not) as they see appropriate
 - Contact media
- Develop personal / direct / reliable contact with specific person in agencies which can provide immediate and accurate information (RCOA, ASRC, Refugee Legal, Human Rights Law Centre, etc.)

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POLITICS AND PROTEST: THE FIGHT FOR REFUGEE RIGHTS

Australian Refugee Action Network (ARAN) Conference 2018

- Provide a variety of templates ready for use in different situations / events (e.g. Deportation)
 - Create resources if necessary
 - Use existing resources (e.g. Edmund Rice, GetUp, etc.)

INVOLVING PEOPLE WITH LIVED EXPERIENCE

- **Involvement needs to be genuine, not tokenistic**
- Discussion should be made collectively and in collaboration
- ARAN provide expertise regarding lived experience speakers?
- Recognise vulnerability of asylum seeker involvement / speaking
- Create a media group
- Lived experience people educate ARAN members
- Engage with a diverse range – women, young people, etc.
- Involvement of most vulnerable groups – TPV Asylum Seekers who came by boat
- Involve established groups of former refugees
- Training for young people from refugee backgrounds in their rights and responsibilities
- Training and support for young people on public speaking and media
 - RCAN (RCOA)
 - RCOA Refugee Reference Groups
 - RCOA Refugee Ambassadors
 - Freedom Network (ASRC)
 - MYAN provides training for young people in public speaking
 - RISE (Melbourne)
 - Jesuit Services (Victoria?) – speakers
 - Tamil Refugee Council
 - South Sudanese Community (Sydney?) – speakers

COMMUNICATION AND ENGAGEMENT WITH ARAN MEMBER GROUPS

- Annual Conference a **MUST**
 - Alternate years – RAR and ARAN responsible?
- Can have a Conference **or** General Meeting
- Consider the tyranny of distance, climate change impact
 - Perhaps electronic connection?
- More active social media that tags all member groups
 - ARAN should build to have tens of thousands of followers

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POLITICS AND PROTEST: THE FIGHT FOR REFUGEE RIGHTS

Australian Refugee Action Network (ARAN) Conference 2018

- Need for wider circulation
- Need to bridge the different communication methods for young and older groups
 - Emails, phones – for older people
 - Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, etc, for younger people
- Communication via structured **website** – needs to be:
 - Easy to navigate
 - Easy to search

ARAN CONFERENCE / GENERAL MEETING

- Annual Conference
 - **VERY** important
 - At least one every 2 years
 - Meeting annually is key to cohering the network which broader than RAR
 - Alternate years RAR and ARAN?
 - Hold AGM every year, conference every second year
- E-Conferencing
- Include options for home-stays, accommodation sharing on website
- Rotate location – equality of funding (consider cost for attendees from Darwin, Perth, Hobart, etc.)
- Must include:
 - Refugee ethnic groups
 - Constituent groups
- Include a session on civil disobedience
- Invite speakers from other movements to speak about successful campaigns– e.g. marriage equality, Stop Adani
- Invite international speakers to speak (e.g. via Skype) about campaigns (e.g. successful anti-deportations)

CONFERENCE WRAP UP

Pamela Curr gave a brief wrap up of the conference and encouraged everyone to keep on with strong advocacy and activism until we achieve a decent and humane treatment of refugees and people seeking asylum.

In the last moments of the conference session a Resolution put by Max Costello regarding the obligations of the Australian Government under the Work and Safety Act to protect the health and wellbeing of all people in Australian workplaces – including those in detention centres. Those in attendance supported the resolution: [Resolution Carried by ARAN Conference 8 July 2018](#)

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POLITICS AND PROTEST: THE FIGHT FOR REFUGEE RIGHTS

Australian Refugee Action Network (ARAN) Conference 2018

Thanks to everyone who contributed to making the conference a success, including everyone who attended, and especially:

- All presenters and workshop facilitators
- Corinne Grant
- Bobby Kurikose and ANMF for providing the venue and technical support for the conference
- Ann Ng – for co-ordinating catering, and registrations and chasing loose ends!
- Sarah Dagleish – logistics
- Steve Hamilton – co-ordinating kitchen
- Dina, Roqi, Ubah, Mirabel and Hira for assisting with serving food and kitchen duties
- Tamil Feast – for providing a feast for dinner!
- ASRC for catering lunch
- Catholic Migrant and Refugee Office – donation of dinner venue
- Paul Dunn – photography
- Eugene Schluscher – filming
- Julie Cattlin – design

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POLITICS AND PROTEST: THE FIGHT FOR REFUGEE RIGHTS

Australian Refugee Action Network (ARAN) Conference 2018

DELEGATES' SESSION AND ELECTION OF ARAN COMMITTEE

Each ARAN member group was invited to provide 2 delegates to vote on the new committee.



The ARAN Committee for 2018-19:

Angelica Panopoulos (Refugee Action Collective Victoria – RAC Vic)
Azlan Petra (Co-opted)
Christian Bashimbe (Co-opted)
Clare Forbes (Grandmothers Against Detention of Refugee Children – GADRC)
Elizabeth Lang (WA Collective)
Emmanuel Kondok (Community of South Sudanese and Other Marginalised Areas – CSSOMA)
Jan Govett (Rural Australians for Refugees – RAR)
Marie Hapke (Refugee Advocacy Network – RAN)
Meg Clark (Canberra Refugee Action Committee – Canberra RAC)
Peter Robson (Darwin Asylum Seeker Support and Advocacy Network – DASSAN)
Rachel Silber (Melbourne Youth for Refugees)

A lunch meeting was held with outgoing and newly-elected ARAN Committee members.

