

Overview - Australian Refugee Action Network (ARAN)

The idea of establishing a national network to promote collaboration between grassroots refugee advocacy and activism networks across rural, regional and metropolitan areas was initially discussed at the Rural Australians for Refugees National Conference in September 2016.

A small working group was formed in September 2016 to progress the idea and groups across Australia were contacted to determine support for the concept. After gathering an initial membership, the inaugural ARAN national conference was proposed for May 2017, and additional representatives were invited to join the working group to plan the conference, which was hosted by the Refugee Action Committee in Canberra in May 2017. The two-day inaugural conference was a great success with 200 people attending from 40 different groups from across Australia. The report on the Inaugural ARAN Conference can be seen at [ARAN-conference-2017](#).

ARAN was formally launched at the inaugural ARAN conference in Canberra in May 2017, and a committee was elected (see Attachment A).

In July 2018 the second ARAN conference: Politics and Protest was hosted by Refugee Advocacy Network in Melbourne and was attended by 150 people from 45 different groups. The report on the Inaugural ARAN Conference can be seen at [ARAN-conference-2018](#). A general meeting was also held at the 2018 conference, and a new committee was elected (see Attachment B).

ARAN is focussed mainly on advocacy on issues affecting people seeking asylum, including those issues which have broader impact across refugee communities.

ARAN membership

By June 2018 ARAN membership had grown to 70 member grassroots refugee advocacy and activist groups and networks from across all states and territories, and since then an additional 12 groups have joined ARAN. Larger NGOs which have a key role in leading refugee advocacy are invited to join ARAN as Associate members – see membership list at Attachment C.

The ARAN member networks and groups are in broad agreement (though not unanimous) agreement about the policy positions we oppose and what we support as an alternative policy approach. While we have fundamentally similar aims, member groups undertake various activities and different styles of activism and advocacy – this diversity is a strength and extends the reach and influence of the movement.

ARAN encourages member networks and groups to take a range of actions including:

- large scale rallies and smaller actions in public places
- displaying signs at a highly visible and busy area for traffic
- other creative actions, such as the Bendigo Grandmothers supermarket action (see pic below)
- protests outside the offices of Federal MPs
- contacting and lobbying MPs and Senators directly
- petitions and letter writing actions
- social media networks tagging relevant MPs and journalists



ARAN Activities in 2018-2019

ARAN seeks to strengthen the impact of the many and varied efforts of activist and advocacy networks and groups by drawing together and publicising their activities.

Being well connected to a wide range of grassroots networks and groups and key refugee advocacy organisations and discussion forums, ARAN identifies critical issues and campaign opportunities and suggests actions to generate and coalesce momentum at particular times. ARAN provides information and suggests a range of activities which networks and groups can undertake depending on their resources and inclinations.

ARAN UPDATES were produced and circulated to member networks and groups in August, September, October, November, December 2018, and January, March, May, June and August 2019. In addition, several Urgent CALLS TO ACTION were circulated by email when immediate action was needed.

In September 2018 ARAN prepared a briefing pack for the Pacific Leaders Forum (held on Nauru) to draw attention to the situation on Nauru and Manus Island.

The ARAN Committee also produced a comprehensive report on the 2018 ARAN Conference – Politics and Protest – see report [ARAN-conference-2018](#).

ARAN called for concerted and co-ordinated action on the following issues

2018

- ❖ In August 2018 ARAN called on member groups to write to MPS and Senators to bring people to safety from Manus and Nauru, to write to local Councils to encourage them to join the local government Back Your Neighbour campaign for the restoration of SRSS, and promoted the #turnbacktohumanity campaign (People Just Like Us)
- ❖ In September we encouraged members to join the #kidsoffnauru campaign and to prepare for actions on International Children's Day on October 24.
- ❖ In October we provided postcards and other resources to support actions for the #KidsOffNauru campaign including October 24, and Blue for Nauru on November 13, and also circulated a number of petitions. The Update included photos of the RAR action in Canberra, and information about the Academics for Refugees call to End the Harm, and a call for continued lobbying to reverse the cuts to SRSS.
- ❖ In November we called on groups to support the Teachers Walk-Out in support of #KidsOffNauru, Blue for Nauru, and encouraged groups to Make a Noise on Universal Children's Day (November 20) to demand that the children remaining on Nauru be brought to Australia together with their families. We also called for people to attend



that rally on 27 November in Canberra, and to also call politicians to support this action. Member groups were also encouraged to lobby ALP politicians for fair and decent policies in the lead up to the ALP National Conference in December in Adelaide.

- ❖ In December the children were off Nauru, and the Phelps' Medevac Bill was passed in the Senate. ARAN encouraged groups continue to support the SRSS campaign, and to also lobby for Hakeem who was being held in Thai authorities and at risk of deportation, in spite of having been recognised as a refugee by Australia. ARAN also produced a Christmas card for member groups to send to politicians to remind them that 'everyone deserves safety and hope'.



STOP THE CUTS TO SRSS payments
Refugees must not be made homeless and destitute

2019

- ❖ In January we encouraged member groups to lobby MPs to pass the Medevac Bill with #WeAreWatching - Back the Bill - Allow Urgent Medical Transfers postcards.
- ❖ In the March 2019 Update in the wake of the Christchurch mosque massacres, and in the lead into the federal election, ARAN suggested member groups call on all politicians to promote respect, and to abandon the fearmongering and divisive rhetoric. Member groups were encouraged to support the campaign for the Tamil family from Biloela who would be threatened with deportation unless the High Court found in their favour.
- ❖ In April Palm Sunday rallies and actions were held across the country, and ARAN promoted concerted action, collated a list of actions and supported a national approach to media coverage.
- ❖ In May ARAN shared various resources for relevant to the federal election, including links to a number of scorecards prepared by various groups, and flagged World Refugee Day in June, and the sixth anniversary of offshore processing on 19 July. The unexpected re-election of the Morrison Government was deeply disappointing as Labor had made a number of policy commitments in favour of refugees and people seeking asylum.
- ❖ In June ARAN provided resources to support 6 years Too Long actions (July 19), including Message of Hope and postcards to politicians. Over 500 Messages of Hope were received from 12 groups across Australia, including one school. ARAN also shared post-election analysis from ARAN member groups, and suggested member groups write to all government and opposition politicians calling for fairness and justice in the treatment of people seeking asylum.
- ❖ In July ARAN encouraged member groups to make submissions to the Senate Inquiries on the:
 - Migration Legislation Amendment (Regional Processing Cohort) Bill 2019 to amend the *Migration Act 1958* and the Migration Regulations 1994 to prevent unauthorised maritime arrivals who were at least 18 years of age and were taken to a regional processing country after 19 July 2013 from making a valid application for an Australian visa.
 - Migration Amendment (Repairing Medical Transfers) Bill 2019 to amend the Migration Act 1958 to repeal the Medevac legislation.
- ❖ In the August Update ARAN promoted the action on 29 July by hundreds of refugees at Parliament House to protest temporary protection visas and the various conditions they suffer including lack of family reunion provisions. The Jubilee letter writing action proposed by CRAG was promoted, and the anticipated visit by UN Inspectors to inspect detention facilities was flagged. An urgent call was also put out to support snap actions for the Biloela family as they faced deportation.

Communications and Resources

The ARAN website has been redeveloped and provides:

- Listings of current actions
- Information and resources to support member groups in developing their campaign activities
- Refugee campaign information
- ARAN Member Networks events and information
- Current news on refugee issues

The ARAN Facebook page has been maintained as an important avenue for sharing information.

A special callout here to Jan Govett for maintaining the website and Facebook and monitoring the ARAN email

- ARAN Email account - austrefugeenetwork@gmail.com
- ARAN Website - <https://aran.net.au/>
- ARAN Facebook Page - <https://www.facebook.com/AustralianRefugeeActionNetwork/>
- ARAN Twitter Account - <https://twitter.com/AustRefNetwork>
Twitter Handle is @AustRefNetwork

ARAN Finances

ARAN does not raise funds or collect membership fees, and activities are undertaken at minimal cost. A donation of \$500 in early 2018 is held in the ARAN bank account, with no transaction on the account in the last 12 months.

CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

Committee membership

The ARAN Committee has been active throughout the year, maintaining fortnightly online zoom meetings, with occasional special meetings when required. Committee members exchange information on current issues and campaigns drawing on their own networks, involvement in sector forums, working groups, conferences (RCOA, RAR, Progress) etc; and input from member groups to identify priority issues and actions to promote through the ARAN network.

While the committee has maintained a core membership, some members have found that they were unable to continue their involvement for various reasons, including personal and/or other organisational commitments. We thank Clare Forbes, Meg Clark, Rachel Silber, Emmanuel Kondok, Elizabeth Lang, Azlan Petra, Adair O'Brien, and Christian Bashimbe for their various contributions to the Committee.

The following have agreed to continue as Committee members: Marie Hapke (Refugee Advocacy Network), Jan Govett (RAR), Peter Robson (DASSAN), Angelica Panopoulos (RAC Vic), and Jean Ker Walsh has replaced Clare Forbes as the representative for Grandmothers Against the Detention of Refugee Children.

Approach to filling current vacancies on the ARAN Committee

In the August ARAN Update the Committee requested comment from member groups on proposed amendments to the Terms of Reference (see Attachment D) to require that a General Meeting/or ARAN Conference be held every two years, and for designated positions on the Committee for Rural Australians for Refugees and Grandmothers Against the Detention of Refugee Children, (both being national networks) and the National Refugee Advisory and Advocacy Group (NRAAG).

As allowed in the original Terms of Reference elected Committee have the option of serving two years, and the Committee can co-opt up to three members to fill vacancies.

The Committee is keen to extend the representation of groups from across Australia and will seek nominations from member groups to fill current vacancies. The Committee will actively seek a nomination from the newly formed National Refugee Advisory and Advocacy Group (NRAAG).

Current priorities for the ARAN Committee

The objectives of ARAN are ambitious. Like all committees, the ARAN Committee seeks to achieve a lot with limited time and resources. Some of the key challenges we have encountered are described below, and some of the ideas we have about how to address these challenges going forward are described.

Challenges and suggested approaches:

1. Committee meetings – frequency and duration. This is a common issue for most groups – how to best use the time of Committee members to plan and execute the activities of the group.
Suggested approach: We may consider a monthly strategy discussion to identify ARAN priorities and ideas for action/lobbying etc. This meeting would be open to any ARAN member group, with a core membership of ARAN Committee members. The strategy discussion would be complemented with fortnightly administration meeting to deal with matters relating to communications, correspondence, membership etc.
2. Maintaining the social media presence of ARAN is recognised as important, but is also time consuming, and has tended to fall to people who also have significant other commitments in their own local groups.
Suggested approach: The Committee will seek volunteers (ideally from member networks and groups) to assist with social media – while not necessarily having other committee responsibilities.
3. Involvement of people with lived experience on the ARAN committee
Suggested approach: The Committee will invite National Refugee Advisory and Advocacy Group (NRAAG) to provide a representative to the ARAN committee.
4. We have limited capacity to respond rapidly when issues arise unexpectedly.
Suggested approach: The ARAN committee will identify a small group which can convene quickly to agree on any rapid responses.
5. We would like to hear more routinely from member groups regarding their actions, and suggestions for ARAN.
Suggested approach: We will contact member groups to ensure that we have contact details for the person best able to provide regular updates on the member group's activities and input to ARAN.
6. The Committee is keen to plan for a Conference/General Meeting in 2020 and is seeking any offers of support in terms of venue and assistance with organising. If you have any ideas or suggestions, please get in touch!

MOVING FORWARD

We are committed to continuing the work of ARAN to foster coordinated actions across Australia to demonstrate and mobilise the considerable level of public opposition to current policy and operations. In the current political climate a united approach is more important than ever.

Attachment A: ARAN committee members 2017-2018

Amir Javan - People Just Like Us (NSW)
Caron Molster - RRAN WA - Refugee Rights Action Network (WA)
Emmanuel Kondok - Community of South Sudanese and Other Marginalised Areas Group
James Supple - Refugee Action Coalition Sydney (NSW)
John Minns - Canberra Refugee Action Committee (ACT)
Kali (Kaliyugan) Pathmanathan (co-opted) - Tamil Refugee Council
Lili Calitz - Amnesty's Tasmanian Refugee Rights Group (Tas)
Linda Cusworth - CRAG - Combined Refugee Action Group (Geelong, Vic)
Margaret Rasa (retired April 2018) - Rural Australians for Refugees (National)
Jan Govett (co-opted May 2018) - Rural Australians for Refugees (National)
Marie Hapke - RAN - Refugee Advocacy Network (Vic)
Pamela Curr - Brigidine Asylum Seeker Project (Vic)
Peter Robson - Darwin Asylum Seeker Support and Advocacy Network (NT)

Attachment B: ARAN committee members 2018 - 2019

Angelica Panopoulos – Refugee Action Collective (Vic)
Azlan Petra and Christian Bashimbe in an individual capacity
Elizabeth Lang – WA Collective
Clare Forbes – Grandmothers Against Detention of Refugee Children
Emmanuel Kondok – Community of South Sudanese and Other Marginalised Areas Group (NSW)
Jan Govett - Rural Australians for Refugees (National)
Marie Hapke - RAN - Refugee Advocacy Network (Vic)
Meg Clark & Adair O'Brien – Refugee Action Coalition (ACT)
Peter Robson - Darwin Asylum Seeker Support and Advocacy Network (NT)
Rachel Silber – Melbourne Youth with Refugees (Vic)

Attachment C: ARAN Member Groups - September 2019

National

1. Academics for Refugees
2. CAPSA – Catholic Alliance for People Seeking Asylum
3. Circle of Friends
4. Doctors 4 Refugees
5. GADRC – Grandmothers Against Detention of Refugee Children
6. Jews 4 Refugees
7. Love Makes a Way
8. Manus Emergency Fund
9. Mums 4 Refugees
10. People Just Like Us
11. RAR – Rural Australians for Refugees
12. Sanctuary Australia Foundation
13. Tamil Refugee Council
14. Teachers 4 Refugees

ACT

1. Refugee Action Committee, Canberra

NSW

1. Amnesty International NSW Refugee Network
2. Community of South Sudanese and Other Marginalised Areas
3. GADRC – Grandmothers Against Detention of Refugee Children – Newcastle
4. GADRC – Grandmothers Against Detention of Refugee Children – NSW
5. Home Among the Gum Trees NSW
6. Hunter Asylum Seeker Advocacy
7. Mid North Coast Refugee Support Group
8. Refugee Action Coalition (Sydney)
9. Refugee Action Collective Eurobodalla
10. Refugee Action Collective Illawarra
11. Rural Australians for Refugees – Armidale
12. Rural Australians for Refugees – Queanbeyan
13. Rural Australians for Refugees – Yass
14. Stop the Shame (Shoalhaven)
15. Valerio Daniel De Simoni Association

NT

1. DASSAN – Darwin Asylum Seeker Support and Advocacy Network
2. Light the Dark Alice Springs

Queensland

1. BRASS network – Brisbane Refugee and Asylum Seeker Support Network
2. Cairns for Refugees
3. Noosa Welcomes Refugees
4. Refugee Action Collective (Queensland)
5. Gold Coast Get-Up

SA

1. Amnesty Action Group – Semaphore/Port Adelaide
2. Amnesty International SA Refugee Action Network
3. ARA – Australian Refugee Association SA
4. Bring Them Here Vigil Group
5. Justice for Refugees (SA)

Tasmania

1. Amnesty International Tasmania Refugee Action Group
2. Amnesty International Tasmania Branch
3. Amnesty International Tasmania Southern Group
4. TASS – Tasmanian Asylum Seeker Support
5. Tassie Nannas
6. Uniting Church in Australia – Synod of Vic/Tas

Victoria

1. Amnesty International Refugee Network Victoria
2. BRASA – Bayside Refugee Advocacy and Support Association
3. Brigidine Asylum Seeker Project
4. Close the Camps Action Collective
5. CRAG – Combined Refugee Action Group
6. GADRC – Grandmothers Against Detention of Refugee Children
7. Hobsons Bay Refugee Network
8. Law Students for Refugees
9. Montmorency Asylum Seekers Support Group (MASSG)
10. Mornington Peninsula Human Rights Group
11. Refugee Action Collective (Vic)
12. RAN – Refugee Advocacy Network
13. Rural Australians for Refugees – Aireys Inlet
14. Rural Australians for Refugees – Albury-Wodonga

15. Rural Australians for Refugees – Apollo Bay
16. Rural Australians for Refugees – Ballarat
17. Rural Australians for Refugees – Bendigo
18. Rural Australians for Refugees – Castlemaine
19. Rural Australians for Refugees – Deans Marsh
20. Rural Australians for Refugees – Mansfield
21. Rural Australians for Refugees – South
Gippsland
22. Southern Women’s Action Network (SWAN)
23. Uniting Church in Australia – Synod of Vic/Tas
24. Youth with Refugees – Greater Geelong
25. Youth with Refugees (Melbourne)
25. Youth for Refugees – Melbourne

WA

1. RRAN (WA) – Refugee Rights Action Network
2. WA Amnesty Refugee Rights group

International

1. International Alliance Against Mandatory
Detention

ARAN Associate member groups

AIA- Amnesty International Australia
ASRC - Asylum Seeker Resource Centre
Australian Churches Refugee Taskforce
GetUp
HRLC - Human Rights Law Centre
RCOA - Refugee Council of Australia

Attachment D: Australian Refugee Action Network

**National Committee
Terms of Reference – September 2019**

Context

The campaign for refugee rights has been a long fight. There have been many twists and turns in the campaign which have required those in the movement to respond quickly. Without a national coordinating body, the capacity to provide a comprehensive response to issues is limited. The Australian Refugee Action Network (ARAN) promotes and networking and exchange between grassroots advocacy and activist networks and groups and encouraging co-ordinated national actions and lobbying on particular issues.

Purpose

The purpose of the Australian Refugee Action Network (ARAN) National Committee is to:

- Provide an avenue for organised communication and collaboration between grassroots refugee advocacy and activist networks and groups across the nation
- Suggest forms of, and themes for, actions, including national days of action
- Receive proposals from member organisations to initiate actions on a national basis
- Issue draft press releases for discretionary use by member networks and groups
- Resource member networks and groups by sharing graphic design, videos, fact sheets etc.
- Maximize social media reach by the sharing of local actions and events around the nation

Scope and Authority

The ARAN National Committee has the authority to make decisions regarding the operations of the Australian Refugee Action Network which are within the purpose and scope outlined above.

The Committee has no power or authority to make decisions for, or give direction to, individual member organisations. Each member organisation maintains autonomy and carries out its own operations as it sees fit.

The ARAN National Committee is expected to:

- Based on information and priorities identified by member networks and groups, make suggestions about campaigns (e.g. timing, forms and themes for nation action)
- Receive proposals from individual member organisations to initiate actions on a national basis
- Issue proforma press releases for use by member networks and groups in relation to national actions or issues
- Based in information provided by member networks and groups, develop a resource list of spokespeople and high-profile supporters
- Share information and resources with member organisations
- Provide an Update to member organisations, generally on a monthly basis.

Membership

The ARAN National Committee:

- Will be elected by delegates from ARAN member networks and groups
- Will be elected at an annual national conference/or general meeting which is (ideally) held in a different city each year.
- Will be elected according to a simple first-past-the-post system (i.e. a ranking of the number of votes for each candidate)
- Will consist of no fewer than six and no more than ten members
- Will not include more than one member from any organisation
- Will appoint its own convenor and secretary, and other office bearers if required
- A general meeting will be held at least every 2 years.
- In any year that a conference or general meeting is not held, the Committee will issue a report on activities, including a financial report, and will call for online nominations to the Committee. If more than 10 nominations are received, an online vote will be conducted to determine the membership of the Committee.
- Will have broad geographic and political representation – it is desirable for the ARAN Committee to have at least one person from each state and territory on the Committee.
- The following networks/groups will have a designated position on the ARAN committee, and it is the responsibility of these networks/groups to select a suitable person to represent them on the ARAN Committee:
 - Rural Australians for Refugees
 - Grandmothers Against the Detention of Refugee Children
 - National Refugee Advisory and Advocacy Group (NRAAG).
- The Committee may request representation from the Refugee Advocacy Network, DASSAN, Amnesty Refugee Networks, and any other network with significant membership or other relevance to the objectives of ARAN.
- Is authorised to co-opt up to 3 members to fill vacancies arising between elections or to extend the composition or skill base of the committee

Where there the number of candidates does not exceed the number of positions on the Committee, candidates will be deemed elected as a matter of course.

Those elected to the ARAN Committee are elected for 12months, with an option to serve a second 12 month term after which time they may stand for re-election.

People who have lived refugee experience, who belong to an ARAN member network or group, and who are actively involved in campaigning for Australia to uphold its international human rights obligations with regard to people seeking asylum, are encouraged to nominate for the ARAN National Committee.

The Committee may establish a reference group or list of people with lived experience to consult on key ARAN decisions regarding proposed campaigns

The Committee may establish working groups (on-going or time limited) and may invite people to assist the committee through such working groups. All ARAN Working /groups will be convened by an elected member of the Committee. ARAN Working Groups will provide an update to each ARAN Committee meeting.

Meeting arrangements

- The Committee will meet at least monthly but may meet more regularly if required.
- Meetings will be held online
- The Committee will determine chairing arrangements
- Agendas will be developed by the chair and circulated to Committee members by email at least 3 days before the meeting
- A quorum of half the number of total Committee members must be present in order for decisions to be made
- Meeting minutes will be taken by the secretary, and will be circulated to Committee members by email within 7 days of the meeting
- Communication between meetings will occur by email, with members using the 'reply all' function to involve all members in the ensuing discussion

Resources and budget

The ARAN Committee is authorised to raise funds for ARAN projects and activities which are consistent with the purpose of the Committee as outlined in this above. Budgets will be set accordingly. The signatures of two Committee members will be required for all withdrawals and expenditure.

Reporting

The Committee will provide an annual report at the national conference or general meeting.

Any income and expenditure will be reported to member organisations annually after the end of each financial year.

Review

Terms of Reference will be reviewed as required. Any amendments proposed by the Committee will be put for discussion at a General Meeting, or in the absence of a general meeting, distributed to ARAN members by email.