MEDIA RELEASE

Australian Refugee Action Network (ARAN)

18 July 2023

**Nationwide refugee rallies mark 10 year anniversary of offshore detention and resettlement cruelty**

Wednesday 19th July 2023 marks 10 years since PM Kevin Rudd announced: *“As of today, asylum seekers who come here by boat without a visa will never be settled in Australia”.*

Thousands of people across Australia are set to rally in more than 20 events across Australia to call for fair processing of refugee claims, permanent visas, safe resettlement for refugees, and an end to offshore detention.

A solidarity protest will also take place in Greece, organised by Greek refugee advocacy group KEERFA, who say:

*“Australia’s draconian and inhumane policies have been a terrible example across the world, not least here in Greece. Boat pushbacks are now part of the Mitsotakis government’s practice, and closed detention centres are being built on the Aegean Islands.”*

International events are also being planned for London, Italy, Portugal and Los Angeles.

**A full list of planned events is included below.**

Website: [aran.net.au/actions/#10Years](http://aran.net.au/actions/#10Years)
Email: austrefugeenetwork@gmail.com

**STATEMENTS FROM MEMBERS OF THE AUSTRALIAN REFUGEE ACTION NETWORK:**

**Behrouz Boochani, Iranian journalist, author and former Manus Island detainee says:**

*“It is unbelievable that this tragedy is still going on after ten years with people stuck in Port Moresby. Many lives have been damaged, many families separated, and now Australia has abandoned them. Nothing has been achieved. Nothing but the creation of a tragedy and the mental and physical damage to hundreds of people. Humanitarian and democratic values have been undermined.”*

**John Minns, Emeritus Professor, ANU says:**Media contact: John Minns 0407 483 952

*“More than 10,000 people are still living their life in limbo because the current Labor government has refused to overturn the system of cruelty for refugees, started by Prime Minister Rudd and continued under the Liberal National governments .**These people have lost a decade of their lives; they are unable to reunite with their loved ones. Whether here in Australia or in PNG, these refugees are refused resettlement in Australia. Those in Australia and are denied access to education and safety net supports if they cannot work to support themselves.”*

**Zaki Haidari, campaigner for Amnesty International says:**

Media contact: Amnesty media line 0423 552 206

“Anthony Albanese and the Labor party won government promising a new era of fairness and basic dignity for refugees and asylum seekers, but on the 10 year anniversary of Labor’s cruel offshore detention and resettlement regime, too little has changed.

Despite its commitments to the public, the Labor government have still failed to abolish the senselessly cruel Temporary Protection Visa class, replace the disastrously flawed Fast Track system for assessments and evacuate all refugees from Manus Island.”

**Jonathan Strauss, National President of Rural Australians for Refugees says:**

Media contact: Jonathan Strauss 0437 790 306

***“****The ten year policy triad of boat turn-backs, detaining a whole group of refugees offshore and now maintaining the emptied prison-camp on Nauru in which they were held, and refusing to settle them here, is ten years too long that human rights and simple decency have been denied. Actions organised by Rural Australians for Refugees and other groups will make sure this message is heard across Australia.”*

**Margaret Browne for Grandmothers for Refugees says:**

Media contact: Margaret Browne 0402 944 193

*“Grandmothers for Refugees believes Australia has a duty of care to the approximately 11 000 asylum seekers currently held in Australia, some for more than 10 years, and the 80 still trapped in Papua New Guinea. These people have been excluded from processes announced earlier in 2023 to grant permanent protection. This must be rectified.”*

**Ian Rintoul, Refugee Action Coalition says:**

**Media contact: Ian Rintoul** 0417 275 713

*“The Labor government has a very particular responsibility for the refugees sent offshore under Kevin Rudd's edict in 2013. The current Prime Minister and deputy prime minister were a part of the Rudd government that turned their back on those refugees and the refugee convention ten years ago. Labor will spend more than $420 million in the next two years to keep Nauru open for business. It is shocking that the British Prime Minister explicitly uses Australia's offshore detention example as a success story to try and send British asylum seekers to Rwanda, when the only legacy is the thousands of broken bodies and minds of people who sought protection.”*

**Josephine Langbien, Senior Lawyer at the Human Rights Law Centre says:**

Media Contact**:** ThomasFeng, 0431 285 275, Thomas.feng@hrlc.org.au

*“The Australian Government's detention system in Nauru and Papua New Guinea has inflicted immeasurable suffering upon people who came to Australia asking for safety. Thousands of people’s lives have been irreversibly impacted and at least 14 people have died under this brutal policy. And for many, this ordeal is not yet over. The Albanese Government must urgently evacuate the 80 people still stranded in PNG and end the harmful policy of offshore detention once and for all.”*

**Kon Karapanagiotidis, CEO of Asylum Seeker Resource Centre:**

Media contact: Sam Brennan, sam.b4@asrc.org.au 0428 973 324

*"Ten years ago, the Rudd Government made a choice to send thousands of men, women and children to brutal offshore detention camps, separating them from their families and denying them basic rights. But refugees and the community never stopped fighting, and now the detention centre on Nauru is empty. The Albanese Government must listen to the calls for fairness and compassion, evacuate the 80 people still held in PNG and provide permanent resettlement for all."*

**Dr Asher Hirsch of the Refugee Council of Australia says:**

Media contact: Dr Asher Hirsch, 0488035535

*“Offshore detention was always premised on a failed argument - that by harming those who are seeking safety, we will deter others. It is both inhumane and proven to be false."*

**BACKGROUND:**

Around 1200 people previously held offshore in PNG or Nauru are now here in the Australian community, but they are in limbo because the Labor Government is denying them the right to safe resettlement as refugees in Australia. Most of these people are recognised by UNHCR to be refugees and are owed protection.

Nearly 10,000 people who arrived before 2013 are still waiting for a decision about their refugee status – their claims being processed under the ‘so-called’ Fast Track system. Many are in costly and protracted appeal processes in the courts. Labor acknowledges the Fast Track system is flawed but has not provided an alternative system for timely assessment and review.

All of these people are still in limbo. They have lost a decade of their lives; they are unable to reunite with their loved ones. Whether here in Australia or in PNG, these refugees are refused resettlement in Australia. Those in Australia and are denied access to education and safety net supports if they cannot work to support themselves.

80 people are still held in PNG – Australia should bring them here. These people seeking asylum came by boat because there were no alternative safe pathways. They are still trapped in PNG after 10 years of trauma. Australian Government has abandoned these people.

**LIST OF EVENTS:**

**ACT**

* **Canberra:  Sunday 23 July at 1.00pm**

Refugees in Limbo – Ten Years of Trauma Rally, crn Northbourne Avenue/ London Circuit, Civic
Canberra Refugee Action Campaign – for details email mail@refugeeaction.org
Facebook event:  <https://www.facebook.com/events/1320404255553566/?ref=newsfeed>

**NSW**

* **Armidale: 19 July 2023 5.15-6.00 pm** Central Park, Armidale (near the Rotunda)

Vigil - 10 Years Too Long

Organised by Armidale Rural Australians for Refugees

Further detail arar-owner@une.edu.au

* **Newcastle: 19 July 2023 4pm**

Music and chanting – 10 Years Too Long - Corner Hunter/King Street

Contact lekaniko@gmail.com

* **Sydney:**    **Sunday 23 July 2023, 1.00pm – 3.00pm**    Sydney Town Hall
Rally – Labor’s refugee shame: Ten years too bloody long
Organised by Refugee Action Coalition (Sydney RAC)
Facebook event:  <https://www.facebook.com/events/251677744071258>

**VICTORIA**

* **Brunswick:**    **Sunday 16 July  12.00pm – 1.00pm**  260 Sydney Road Brunswick

Ecumenical Prayer Vigil  – 10 Years Too Long - Pray in lament and hope for refugees

Organised by Brunswick Uniting Church
Further detail: iferguson@icloud.com

* **Melbourne:**  **Wednesday 19 July 5.00pm**   State Library of Victoria
Sing for Refugee Rights – 10 years too long

Organized by:  Love Makes A Way
Enquiries:  lovemakesawaymelb@gmail.com

* **Alexandra:**   Vigil **Wednesday 19th July at 10.00am** Alexandra Rotunda
Organised by Alexandra (Vic) RAR
Enquiries :     rawalsh145@icloud.com
* **Yea:**    Vigil **Wednesday 19th July at 10.00am** Main Street Yea

Organised by Alexandra (Vic) RAR
Enquiries :     rawalsh145@icloud.com

* **Bendigo:**    **Friday 21st July at 4.30pm** Rosalind Park, opposite the fountain

Ten years – too bloody long vigil
Organised by Bendigo RAR

* **Melbourne:**   Vigil Action on **Friday 21 July at 11.00am**

Minister O’Neil’s office, 17 Atherton Road, Oakleigh
This vigil action will mark the 10th anniversary of the policy of Offshore Processing.
For further details contact  gm\_moore@bigpond.net.au

* **Melbourne:**   Rally on **Saturday 22 June   2.00pm**,  State Library of Victoria, Swanston Street Rally:  10 years too bloody long: permanent visas for all now
Organised by Refugee Action Collective (Vic)
Facebook event:  <https://www.facebook.com/events/1326514034593412>

 **QUEENSLAND**

* **Cairns**:  **Wednesday July 19 at 5.30pm**  Western Lawn Cairns Esplanade

Join our rally to end offshore detention and get permanent protection for all refugees.
Facebook event:  <https://www.facebook.com/events/945567223416975>

* **Brisbane**:  **Sunday 23 July at 14:00**   King George Square, Brisbane
Ten years too bloody long – rally for refugee rights
Organised by RAC Qld
Facebook event:  <https://www.facebook.com/events/1425856138169019>

**TASMANIA**

* **Hobart**:  **Friday July 14 from 5.00pm – 6.00pm** cnr of Murray and Macquarie Sts

The Tasmanian Refugee Rights Action Group will be holding their monthly honkathon on the 14th July with “10 yrs too bloody long ” and similar messages on placards

* **Hobart**:  **Friday July 21 from 11.30am – 12.30pm** cnr of Murray and Macquarie
The Tassie Nannas will be having their usual knitting vigil with “10 yrs too bloody long ” messages and postcards to sign. They will then make their way to Senator Carol Brown’s office to gather outside the office with placards.
* **Hobart**:  **Friday July 21 at 12.30pm**Walk to MPs offices – leaving from Elizabeth Street Mall
Refugee Rights group and Tassie Nannas will walk to Senator Carol Brown’s office for a display of placards. A letter asking for the refugees from PNG to be brought to Australia will be delivered to Senator Carol Brown’s office.  Letters will also be delivered to Senator Katryna Bilyk in Kingston and the Minister for Housing and the Homeless Julie Collins M.P.

**SOUTH AUSTRALIA**

* **Adelaide**:  **Wednesday 19th July 12.00pm – 1.00pm**

Refugees in Limbo – 10yrs too long – Actions at MPs offices:   all 12-1pm
- 21 Commercial Rd, Port Adelaide – Office of The Hon Mark Butler MP Office – [see FB event](https://www.facebook.com/photo/?fbid=285868420767343&set=gm.814566436730231)
- 232 Main S Rd, Morphett Vale -Office of The Hon Amanda Rishworth Office – [see FB event](https://www.facebook.com/photo/?fbid=285870297433822&set=gm.1323805995217925)
- 70 Franklin St, Adelaide – Office of The Dept of Home Affairs (Adelaide Vigil)  – see [FB event](https://www.facebook.com/events/235763099262848/?ti=ls)
Actions organised by Justice 4 Refugees SA (J4RSA) and the Adelaide Vigil

**WESTERN AUSTRALIA**

* **Perth**:  **Saturday 22 July at 1.00pm**   Perth Cultural Centre

10 Years Too Long – Permanent Visas for All Refugees!
Facebook event:  <https://www.facebook.com/events/935122197746928>

**GREECE - Solidarity action** 19 July     7 – 8pm  (in Greece)     (AEST  20 July   2am – 3am)
**Australia’s Refugee Shame: #10YearsTooBloodyLong**: Australia’s draconian and inhumane policies have been a terrible example across the world, not least here in Greece. Boat pushbacks are now part of the Mitsotakis government’s practice, and closed detention centres are being built on the Aegean Islands.
Organised by KEERFA:!KEERFA-Salonikis
Facebook event:  <https://facebook.com/events/s/australias-refugee-shame-thess/991606338701965/?mibextid=RQdjqZ>

**International Alliance Against Mandatory Detention group** is encouraging solidarity actions.  Actions may be organised in London, Rome, Setubal (a small city in Portugal), and Los Angeles.
Facebook event:   [https://facebook.com/events/s/australias-refugee-shame-](https://facebook.com/events/s/australias-refugee-shame-world/641352941270419/)

**ENDS**

Website: [aran.net.au/actions/#10Years](http://aran.net.au/actions/#10Years)

Email: austrefugeenetwork@gmail.com