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ARAN

Australian Refugee
Action Network

October 2022 ARAN UPDATE



Philip McNab waits anxiously at Sydney airport to welcome the Syrian refugee family to Australia. Photograph: Jessica Hromas/The Guardian

WHAT'S IN THE UPDATE?

Current issues and advocacy

- Call for the Evacuation of refugees from PNG and Nauru
- Work Rights and Safety Net for all people on Bridging Visas
- Permanent Visas for people currently on TPVs and SHEVs
- New Zealand Resettlement for those who have been held offshore

Coming events

- **21 years since the SIEVX Tragedy**
- **Kaldor Centre Conference**
- **Refugee Fridays**

Past events

- **Hunger for Hope: 9 Day Fast for Refugees St John's Anglican Cathedral, Brisbane**
- **Forum: Compassionate Resettlement for Refugees - What can Australia learn from New Zealand's approach to refugee resettlement?**
- **RAR Conference**

Other News

- **Syrian family welcomed under Community Sponsorship Program**
- **Good news re Women and children stranded in Syria**
- **Grandmothers for Refugees celebrate 8th anniversary**
- **Asylum Insight**
- **Kaldor Centre Weekly Updates**

CURRENT ISSUES & ADVOCACY

Call for the Evacuation of refugees from PNG and Nauru

United Nations rapporteurs have said Australia has a “clear and undeniable” responsibility for people that Australia sent to PNG and Nauru for offshore processing.

People sent to PNG and Nauru have been separated from their families, denied basic human rights and prevented from rebuilding their lives. They have lived in terrible conditions and have been subject to abuse and neglect. Their suffering has been enormous, resulting in a very high incidence of physical and mental illness.

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permanent resettlement solution.

Go to the Kit prepared by the ARAN Network of Letter Writing Groups for further background and suggestions for emails and letters to the Prime Minister, Minister Andrew Giles, Minister for Immigration, and Minister Clare O'Neil, Minister for Home Affairs. We suggest you also send copies of your letters to your local MP. **Please circulate through your groups and networks – and perhaps organise a letter writing session.**

The Kit is available online on the [ARAN website](#) and also the [RAR website](#).

Open Letter: support Wilkie's Bill, bring refugees here, before finalising resettlement

Bellingen-Nambucca RAR has launched its next open letter, which notes a US prisons operator is now being contracted to run detention in Nauru and calls for support for Independent MP Andrew Wilkie's' Ending Indefinite and Arbitrary Immigration Detention Bill and to bring all refugees currently held on Nauru and in PNG to Australia while arrangements for their resettlement are finalised. The open letter runs until November 23. You can get copies by reply email or writing to bellingen.rar@gmail.com.

Work Rights and Safety Net for all people on Bridging Visas

People who are seeking asylum in Australia are usually given Bridging Visas while they wait for a decision about their claim for protection - they usually have the right to work, but if they are unable to find employment, they are NOT eligible to receive any financial or other support from the government except Medicare. Some people are unable to work due to their poor state of health due to years of suffering and uncertainty.

The October ARAN Letter Writing Kit will be available by mid-October with background, and suggested points for letter writing [here](#).

See also ASRC Petition: Let people seeking safety work, study & rebuild: [sign here](#)

Paper: The Costs of Current Refugee Policy – prepared by Grandmothers for Refugees

This paper examines the economic costs to Australia of the current incarcerations and restrictions on those refugees and asylum seekers on Temporary Protections Visas (TPVs), Safe Haven Enterprise Visas (SHEVs) and Bridging Visas (BVEs). It further outlines the way these visa holders can, relatively seamlessly, be transferred to Permanent Visas with particular short-term emphasis on the granting of universal work rights for them and the provision of humanitarian support to facilitate their study and training where needed. [Read the paper here](#).

Permanent Visas for people currently on TPVs and SHEVs

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uncertainty about when people currently on TPV and SHEV visas will be granted Permanent Protection visas. The ARAN Committee has sent a letter to the Minister seeking clarification on when an people can expect to be advised that their visas will be changed to Permanent visas. You may also like to write to the Minister for Immigration, Andrew Giles MP: Andrew.Giles.MP@aph.gov.au.

New Zealand Resettlement for those who have been held offshore

In April this year the Australian Government finally (after saying 'no' for nearly 10 years) accepted the offer by New Zealand to resettle refugees held on Nauru and in PNG.

However, progress has been painfully slow. The [Guardian reported on 30 September](#) that only 36 expressions of interest have been received, and that 14 people have been interviewed by the New Zealand government so far, all of whom are currently on Nauru.

People in Australia who expressed interest in April who have heard nothing since and are naturally disheartened. While it is hoped that those who have expressed interest will soon be accepted for resettlement, there are no guarantees as yet.

During September all those eligible to express interest in resettlement in New Zealand received letters from Home Affairs demanding a response by 4 October. No information was provided regarding the resettlement conditions and supports available in New Zealand, or the application process and anticipated timelines.

An **information session** for people who are eligible to express interest in resettlement in New Zealand is being planned by Refugee Advocacy Network and supported by Refugee Legal. The session will be held in Melbourne on 20 October, with online access by zoom.

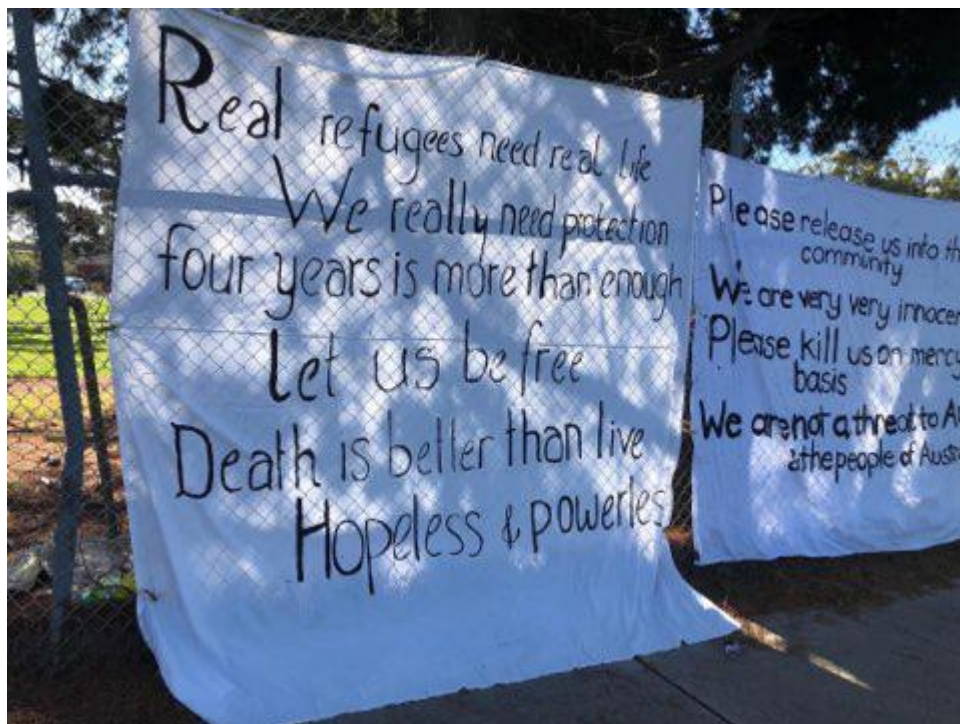
Refugees interested in attending, and people who are supporting eligible people are invited to register by emailing info@refugeeadvocacynetwork.org.au by 19 October.

Raise the Refugee Quota – sign petition

Australia's Refugee and Humanitarian Program's official intake is just 13,750 places annually. This is one of the lowest levels in 45 years, during a time when the need for resettlement has never been greater. [Sign the Amnesty petition here](#) calling on the Albanese Government must increase the annual Refugee and Humanitarian Program to at least 30,000 places - prioritising people selected by the United Nations High Commissioner on Refugees.

Detention

It is very encouraging to see that the Albanese Government is investigating alternatives to immigration detention and considering the creation of a review panel to help clear the "intractable" caseload of people held for long periods. This is good news, given around 1500 people (of which around 200 are refugees) are held in immigration detention, mostly for long periods, some for as long as 10 years. [See Guardian article here](#).

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COMING EVENTS

Sunday 23rd October 2022 from 1pm SIEV X Memorial 21st Anniversary Commemoration – Canberra. Join Canberra RAC and others to mark 21 years since the sinking of the SIEV X. A tragedy that took three hundred and fifty-three lives, the sinking of the SIEV X is a solemn reminder of the struggles that refugees and asylum seekers experience in search of safety. See further details [here](#).

15-18 November KALDOR CENTRE CONFERENCE Turning points: New directions in refugee protection. Attend virtually or in-person. The 2022 Kaldor Centre Conference will bring together experts from around the world to shed light on recent developments and analyse what they mean for the future of international protection. [See program and booking details here](#).

And remember... every Friday is Refugee Friday – initiated by Amnesty Refugee Network

All refugee advocates are being called to demonstrate solidarity and commitment to the just treatment of refugees and asylum seekers by wearing a visible statement of their support every Friday.

PAST EVENTS

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Hunger for Hope: 9 Day Fast for Refugees St John's Anglican Cathedral, Brisbane. For 9 days, at St John's Cathedral, The Rev'd Nicholas Whereat from Aspley-Albany Creek Anglican Church fasted as a Lament for the 9 Years of trauma experienced by people caught up in the offshore processing system. Loving your neighbour as yourself takes action. Over the years Father Nick has prayed, written letters, and held vigils outside places of detention and elected officials' offices to ask for fair treatment of refugees and people seeking asylum. <https://fb.me/e/2NqX8hoMz>.

Forum: Compassionate Resettlement for Refugees - What can Australia learn from New Zealand's approach to refugee resettlement? Abbas Nazari, Zaki Haidari and Dr Claire Loughnan View the forum [here](#).

RAR National Conference 2022 was held at Katoomba, in the Blue Mountains. Over 180 people attended the conference which was a packed program of panel discussions and presentations. The conference report will be available soon on the RAR website. Important update – Jonathan Strauss is the incoming president on the RAR National Committee. We acknowledge the great contribution that Louise Redmond has made in her capacity as RAR President in recent years, and look forward to working with Jonathan – contact rar.australia@gmail.com

Wangaratta RAR – September Action for Visas for Refugees from Afghanistan

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OTHER NEWS

First refugee families welcomed to Australia under new community sponsorship program. A Syrian family are among the fortunate first to be resettled in Australia under the new Community Refugee Integration and Settlement Pilot, which allows community groups across the country to sponsor new refugees. An eight-person sponsorship group, formed through the Gosford Anglican church, has been through a “group mentorship” program to prepare to support the family to settle on the New South Wales Central Coast. The Albanese Government will offer 1500 community-sponsored resettlement places in addition to the current humanitarian program refugee quota (whereas previously such places were subtracted from the program). This means that in the future the efforts of everyday Australians who take part will boost Australia’s overall refugee intake as well as offering a warm and personal reception. The program is based on Canada’s long-running Private Sponsorship of Refugees program (PSR) which has run uninterrupted for more than 40 years and resettled more than 325,000 refugees, in addition to refugees resettled by the Canadian government.

See [The Guardian report](#) and main picture in this Update.

Australian women and children abandoned in Syria to come home at last – the Australian Government has committed to bring these vulnerable women and their children back.

Grandmothers for Refugees celebrated their 8th anniversary on 6 September 2022. “We send a message to refugees that we welcome you. We are still advocating, and we will not rest until we have seen a reframing of Australia’s policy and practice to respond with compassion towards you and all those who may seek asylum with us”.

[Asylum Insight](#) – updates on the latest news on refugees.

[Kaldor Centre Weekly update](#)

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