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ARAN

Australian Refugee
Action Network

April 2023 ARAN UPDATE



WHAT'S IN THE UPDATE?

Current issues and advocacy

- Call for Evacuation of refugees from PNG and Nauru
- 12,000 left behind – seeking a fair process to resolve their claims for asylum
- **Pathways to permanency (TPV and SHEV holders fear long delays, RCOA online letter)**
- **Other resettlement issues (Slow progress with New Zealand resettlement, 14,000 still stranded in Indonesia)**

Coming events

- **National online Planning Discussion re 19 July actions Tuesday 2nd May – 8pm AEST 10 Years since Labor's bar on resettlement for people arriving by boat. Email austrefugeenetwork@gmail.com for zoom link**

Recent events

- Palm Sunday actions on 2nd April
- RAC Vic protest in Melbourne at ALP fundraiser event
- Protest for Permanent Visas – Adelaide

Some good news

CURRENT ISSUES & ADVOCACY

Evacuation of refugees from PNG and Nauru

149 submissions were made to the Senate Committee Inquiry into the Greens' Evacuation to Safety Bill. Only one submission – from the Department of Home Affairs - was not supportive. The Committee acknowledged that a number of asylum seekers and refugees have been in offshore detention far longer than can reasonably be expected, and recognised that this has resulted in significant personal costs, including physical and mental health costs, that cannot be allowed to continue. Despite this acknowledgement and its call for urgent consideration of removal from offshore processing, the Committee recommended not passing the Evacuation to Safety Bill. It was extremely disappointing that Labor voted with the Coalition to block this legislation.

Around 100 men remain offshore, and many of these have no pathway to safe resettlement. Some are too ill to engage in refugee determination processes and resettlement processes. Zaki Haidari speaks about the cruelty of offshore detention and denying people a pathway to resettlement in Australia because they arrived by

- If you would like to find out more about a campaign planning group being led by the National Amnesty Refugee Network (NARN) email austrefugeenetwork@gmail.com
- Write to Labor MPs and Senators – [see ARAN Letter Kit](#)
- Sign the [ASRC online letter to politicians](#)

12,000 people seek fair process

More than 2,000 refugees and supporters rallied at Parliament House in Canberra on 6th March to draw attention to the 12,000 people seeking a fair process in the assessment of their claims for asylum. [See Canberra Times report here.](#)

Most of these people have been subject to 'Fast Track' processing and have lived on precarious temporary bridging visas for up to 10 years.

They include:

- people whose refugee claims have or are being processed under the so-called Fast Track processing system. Many are either still waiting for an initial decision to be made or have had their claims rejected and are seeking a review of the decision in the courts.
- Around 1,000 people who were sent to either Nauru or PNG under Australia's offshore detention regime, then subsequently brought to Australia for medical care. People in this group have never been allowed to apply for asylum in Australia.

The Labor Party regards the Fast Track processing system as inherently unfair and flawed and it is ALP policy to abolish the system. However, the government is now sticking to the decisions made under this fundamentally unfair system.

What is the Fast Track processing? In 2014 Tony Abbott, then PM introduced the Fast Track processing system for people who arrived by boat to seek asylum and it is neither fast nor fair. The Fast Track processing system made it much more difficult for people to be recognised as refugees:

- people are given just one chance to present their case for asylum - no subsequent evidence is permitted
- review and appeal rights are severely curtailed. The Immigration Assessment Authority does not hear from people seeking asylum, instead, their decisions are generally based on information provided by the Department of Immigration
- The primary interview is often done by phone with little notice. For

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using a remote translation service, during which her legal representative dropped out of the call at crucial times.

Read more about [Fast Track processing](#) here.

Take Action:

Write to your MP: Combine Refugee Action Group (CRAG) has prepared [Briefing Notes for meeting with politicians](#): and a [Toolkit for writing letters to politicians](#):

Sign the Grandmothers for Refugees petition calling for the government to 'Affirm Australia's duty of care to ALL of the about 30,000 people who came by boat seeking asylum in Australia (Unauthorised Maritime Arrivals, Legacy Caseload, and Transitory Persons). Download and print the paper petition [here](#). Note: signed pages to be returned by mail by 19 May 2023.

Pathways to Permanency

TPV and SHEV pathways to permanency. TPV and SHEV holders fear long delays, as the granting of permanent visas is progressing slowly since the announcement in February. Key aspects of the process:

- It is likely to take up to 12 months to process all RoS Visa applications.
- The application for a RoS is subject to a further assessment on character, health and security grounds, however protection status will not be reassessed
- Once people are granted a RoS Visa, they will be able to apply to sponsor family members through the migration program

Further information see the following factsheets: [RCOA summary](#), [ASRC Info sheet](#), [RACS factsheet](#), [Dept of Immigration RoS criteria](#). For further advice and assistance contact Refugee Advice and Casework Service or Refugee Legal.

RCOA lobbying for improved pathways to permanency [Sign the online letter](#) asking the Government to:

- Commit to significantly increasing the refugee and humanitarian intake in the 2023 Budget
- De-link the onshore and offshore components of the Humanitarian Program

Submission on Complementary Protection

Other Resettlement issues

New Zealand: Refugees who have been held offshore and have expressed interest in resettlement in New Zealand are still waiting for advice about the outcomes of their applications, though some have progressed to medicals, indicating slow movement towards resolution. It is nearly 12 months since the first expressions of interest were made. Expressions of interest are still open – see information [here](#).

Indonesia: 14,000 refugees are still stranded in Indonesia. In late 2022 Ian Rintoul (RAC Sydney) and Margaret Sinclair (RAC Vic) went to Indonesia to find out more about the situation for refugees stranded since the Australian Government's 2014 ban on resettlement from Indonesia. Margaret reports "Refugees have been left languishing in Indonesia by successive governments for more than a decade now. Policies such as Scott Morrison decision to reduce the intake and to place a ban on refugees arriving under the humanitarian program if they registered with UNHCR after July 2014 has left 14,000 people in a state of despair, trauma and desperation. Refugees in Indonesia are not allowed to work, study, gain a qualification, get a driver's license, have a sim card for their phones or even change their city of residence. A third of all refugees receive no support, two third receive not enough support to live on, no one who arrived after March 2018 receives any support and the cost of living has left every single person begging in order to have enough to eat to stay alive. This humanitarian crisis was created by Australia who 100% funds International Organisation for Migration in Indonesia. This is an organisation which treats refugees in a punitive manner. We all need to call on the Australian government to lift the ban and drastically increase the humanitarian intake. Creating a safe pathway forward is a much needed humanitarian response to a humanitarian crisis. Australia's militarized response is the wrong response and doesn't help anyone."

See [further details](#) here.

See also [RCOA report](#) for further detail about the situation for these refugees.

It's time to demand that Labor ends the ban and brings the refugees here.

Raise the Refugee Quota Amnesty International Australia is working to convince the government to raise the quota, in line with their policy platform. Sign the Amnesty petition

RCOA is also calling for an increase in the Refugee quota – [sign the online letter](#)

Support a Human Rights Act Submissions open until 1 July 2023. The Attorney-General has announced an Inquiry into Human Rights through a Joint Parliamentary Committee. The committee will consider:

- whether the Australian Parliament should enact a federal Human Rights Act, and if so, what elements it should include
- whether existing mechanisms to protect human rights in the federal context are adequate and if improvements should be made, including:
- the effectiveness of existing human rights Acts/Charters in protecting human rights in the ACT, Victoria and Queensland, including relevant caselaw, and work done in other states and territories.

See further details on how to make a submission [here](#). Submissions can be brief - stating your concern that Australia has no legislated Human Rights Act. A one-page submission from as many people as possible will hopefully assist the Committee to see that there is broad concern about the treatment of people in this country. Putting our Human Rights into law will benefit all of us including First Australians, refugees and people seeking asylum.

. In addition to making a submission, you can [sign the Amnesty petition](#) calling for a Human Rights Act.

COMING EVENTS

National Planning discussion for 19 July actions. This year it's 10 years since Labor's bar on resettlement for people arriving by boat, resulting in thousands suffering offshore detention and years of uncertainty, with no prospect of resettlement in Australia. Join the discussion on Tuesday 2nd May 8-9pm AEST. Email austrefugeenetwork@gmail.com for zoom link.

Welcoming Australia Symposium - 10 & 11 May in Melbourne – livestream access \$50 [Welcoming Australia Symposium 2023 Registration, Melbourne | Eventbrite](#)

RECENT EVENTS

Palm Sunday actions on and around 2nd April. Over 20 actions calling for Permanent Visas for ALL refugees were held across Australia. See Palm Sunday photos and a wrap up [here](#).

ARAN supported Palm Sunday with a national planning discussion in early February, and provided various resources to assist local groups, as well as working with Amnesty to distribute a national media release highlighting Palm Sunday as a national day of action calling for Justice for Refugees. SBS did a story covering actions in Sydney, Melbourne and Perth. Many local groups got good media coverage in their communities – great work everyone !

ARAN also did a bulk order for 40 vinyl banners, and these were used across the country – see below one of the 4 banners displayed in Whyalla. We still have 4 banners (only \$50 ea), and if you want to order a banner just email austrefugeenetwork@gmail.com



RAC Vic protest in Melbourne at ALP fundraiser event 3rd April, and open letter to the Minister for Home Affairs Clare O'Neil, which articulates the many cruel aspects of refugee policy that remain firmly in place under the Albanese government. "The detention regime is inhumane; from indefinite detention to offshore detention and the many varied ways in which the Australian Government has denied vulnerable people the basic right to seek asylum, and to resettle successfully. No version of the current state of affairs can be made humane and the idea that there is a humane version should be abandoned by Labor."

See further detail [here](#).

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Refugee Action Collective Victoria's Margaret Sinclair and Nachshon Amir holding a banner to grab Clare O'Neil's attention

Protests for Permanent Visas – Adelaide – February 2023 Protest gatherings were organised by Justice for Refugees SA outside of the electoral offices of Mark Butler (he spoke with the group), Penny Wong (overseas at the time) and Amanda Rushworth (follow-up meeting was organised). Great work Adelaide !



SOME GOOD NEWS

Announcement re Permanent Visas (February 2023) Thousands of refugees to be granted permanent visas as Labor moves to fulfil election promise - ABC News Pics of protests – Adelaide – Feb 2022

Parliamentary Friends of Refugees Group – RCOA has supported the formation of a multi-party collective of Members of Parliament and Senators who share a vision of creating a country that is more

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people seeking asylum and promote fairer, more welcoming policies for those who seek protection in Australia. See more information [here](#).

Australian Story - Mother and son's daring rescue mission to evacuate 100 Afghan kids and carers | Australian Story - YouTube
When the Taliban took back power in Afghanistan in 2021, a mother and son in suburban Sydney embarked on an audacious and improbable rescue. Finally, more than a year after the Taliban victory, they've managed to successfully transfer almost 100 children and carers to Australia.

Tweed Citizen of the Year - 'The always modest and wonderful refugee advocate Joan Henderson is our Tweed Citizen of the Year'

(<https://www.tweedvalleyweekly.net.au/>
Thursday, February 2, 2023)

Joan is a co-convenor of the Uki Refugee Project (URP). Started in 2013 by four locals, the URP has grown from strength to strength - its work entails twice yearly 'Friendship Weekends', and constant advocacy and fundraising. The group is currently sponsoring and supporting a refugee in Murwillumbah, NSW, and is also participating in the Community Refugee Integration and Settlement Pilot (CRISP) - intending to re-settle a refugee family in the very near future. Joan has also taken on, almost single-handedly, another huge workload in her work of preparing humanitarian sponsorship visa applications for three vulnerable people who are at grave risk in Afghanistan.



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.

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