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ARAN Update May 2025



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INITIAL REFLECTIONS ON THE ELECTION RESULT

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relief that Labor was returned at the federal election on 3rd May, even though the first term of the Albanese Labor Government was mixed in terms of refugee policy.

Positives included the granting of permanent (RoS) visas to most of the 19,000 people previously on TPVs and SHEVs, the release of many people from long term immigration detention, and the (short lived) end of offshore processing on Nauru, and an increase in the refugee quota to 20,000.

However, there were significant negatives. This includes the horrific legislation passed at the end of 2024 allowing the Australian Government to bribe countries to accept non-citizens we could not otherwise deport, and the re-opening of offshore detention on Nauru after only a few short months, with now around 100 people held there. There has been some movement towards granting permanent visas for those in limbo due to Fast Track but there are still thousands of people living and working in our communities who have uncertain visa status. About 500 people previously held offshore are living and working here with no prospects of permanent visas. Just a few dozen men, some now with families, and some with serious mental health issues, still languish in PNG after 12 long years. Around 14,000 people are still stranded in Indonesia, with no prospect of resettlement, and no rights in Indonesia.

The prospect of a Dutton Government struck fear in our hearts, as we know all too well the divisive rhetoric and harsh policies under the Coalition in the past. Voters rejected hard right wing policies and divisive politics.

With such a sizeable majority in the House, and a much diminished Opposition, the Albanese Government has a real opportunity to fundamentally shift the narrative on refugees to one of welcome, fairness and compassion - in line with the Prime Minister's appeal to us all for a kinder Australia, "to show kindness to those in adversity" .. and that "no one should be left behind".

The Albanese Government has the numbers to end the cruel refugee policies, and to establish an approach that is routinely compassionate, humane and just. It is up to us as advocates to push them to use those numbers to adopt humane policies on refugees.

We will all need to continue campaigning for a fair go for refugees and people seeking asylum, and to pressure our elected representatives to stand up and finally bring an end to the politics of fear and policies of cruelty in this country.

2025 BIG WALK 4 REFUGEES

Register NOW for the virtual Walk in June

The **Big Walk 4 Refugees** is back in 2025 - for the whole of June. Every step that we each make will power the virtual Walk that will go right around Australia, and also pass through Christmas Island, Indonesia, PNG and Nauru before returning to the mainland to finish at Parliament House in Canberra. Participating in the virtual Big Walk is a way to show your support for refugees and people seeking asylum and help raise awareness in the wider community. At certain points in the virtual walk there will be suggestions about how you can take action online to send a message to politicians. **Please share this information and the [Big Walk flyer](#) through your networks!**

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Walk. You can log steps or kilometres manually on the Big Walk website or sync an App on your phone, Fitbit or other device – [click here to see Instructions on how to do this](#).

moves us all ❤️

Once you register, you will receive regular emails about the progress of the virtual Walk and will also hear about local walks or other events associated with the Big Walk. We also encourage you to consider organising a walk event in your area.



REGISTER NOW at <https://events.humanitix.com/bigwalk4refugees2025> so you are ready to join the virtual walk on 1st June ! When you register, you'll be asked to join an existing team (listed on the registration page) or you can register your own team and invite your friends to join. There is a small fee to register, which pays for the IT platform supporting the Big Walk. Refugees and people seeking asylum can register for free, and others are invited to consider choosing the fee level and/or making a donation. Any surplus funds will be donated to a refugee charity. Once you register, you will be sent emails explaining in more detail how to log your activities on the Big Challenge webpage.

For more general information about the Big Walk – go to this website: [Big Walk 4 Refugees 2025 – walking for kindness and a fair go for refugees!](#) See [Frequently Asked Questions \(FAQ\)](#) for further detail about how to participate in the Big Walk.

If you have any queries, or if you would like more information about how to participate, you can join a **zoom session** on [Thursday 29th May at 7.30pm AEST](#). Click here to [join the zoom information session](#). Attend the information session to get answers to your questions and find out how to log your steps or other activities on the website or using the mobile app on your phone. We will also talk about some events that have already been scheduled and ideas for organising local events. Please note – it's possible to participate in the virtual Walk just as an individual, although you have to join or create a team to be able to record your steps. In some areas group walks will be organised. Of course, you are welcome to join any of these, and/or organise a local walk. Events will be listed on the [calendar](#) on the Big Walk 4 Refugees website.

The 2025 virtual Walk route: Starts in Hobart, crosses Bass Strait, and then heads west from Melbourne. It will include key sites of detention in Australia, and will also include Christmas Island, Indonesia, PNG and Nauru, then return down the east coast of Australia, and end in Canberra by the end of June.

Why are we Walking? Last year we walked in solidarity with the 10,000 people in our community [still waiting](#) for permanent visas – as we know, most of these people are still waiting for permanent visas – after 13 years. This year we are [also](#) walking for:

- around 14,000 people stranded in Indonesia, still waiting for resettlement after 12 years
- the 100 + people sent to Nauru since October 2023 and unsure of their future
- around 40 men (some with families) who have been abandoned in Papua New Guinea since 2013.

MUZAFAR'S RIDE for EDUCATION - June 2025

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education in Indonesia and Thailand. Muzafar recently returned to Afghanistan and will be sharing information on the current situation and the bravery of the women there, who continue to go to school regardless of the risk.

Refugee support groups along the route are invited to help Muzafar to publicise the ride and where possible, host events. For more information on Muzafar's ride go to

[Ride for Education](#) . You can also donate on this website, to help raise the target of \$250,000 to support education for refugees, especially women and girls.

See more about the Cisarua Schools here: <https://www.cisarualearning.com/>



PALM SUNDAY ACTIONS - 13 APRIL

Actions were organized in several cities and towns on 13 April to draw attention to the ongoing concerns about the treatment of people seeking asylum and refugees. Here are a few photos and info about some of the actions held:

Canberra - organised by Canberra Refugee Action Campaign



Around 900 people rallied in Canberra for the Say YES to Refugees 2025 Palm Sunday rally. People from across faith, union, student, and multicultural communities joined political activists and activists from the Palestine Solidarity campaign to show

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moving rendition of 'We Shall Overcome' accompanied by Canberra's Rift Raff Band. Speakers included Bishop Mark Short, David Manne and Piume Kaneshan.

Wollongong - organised by Illawarra RAC



About 50 people attended our rally and march for Palm Sunday. The Welcome to Country was given by Uncle Mark Bloxom. Key speaker Zaki Haidari - refugee and refugee advocate. Other speakers from The Greens and Socialist Alliance - both parties with good refugee policies. And, of course, Father Ken from Thirroul Parish.

It was a great atmosphere on a beautiful day with lovely music from Illawarra Union Singers and Rising Tide.

Sydney - organised by Sydney RAC and supporting groups



The Sydney Palm Sunday rally called for Peace, Permanent Visas for Refugees, Unity not Racism, Climate Action and an end to AUKUS.

Brisbane Peace rally - organised by a coalition of local groups



Melbourne - organised by Refugee Advocacy Network and supporting groups

Around 1000 people attended the Palm Sunday action for Justice and Kindness and A Fair Go for Refugees in Melbourne. Comedian and social justice advocate Tom Ballard was MC for a rich program with refugee speakers, special guest Emeritus Professor Gillian Triggs, school students and faith representatives, with music by young Palestinian Australian Sebastian, Ethiopian refugees Eldalkatur, Melbourne Drumming Circles and Melbourne Mass Gospel Choir.

Information stalls included Asylum Seeker Resource Centre, Brigidine Asylum Seeker Project, Mayoral and Councillor Taskforce Supporting People Seeking Asylum, Palestine Australia Relief & Action (PARA), QAIM Foundation, Refugee Advocacy Network, SisterWorks, Free West Papua, Women for Change. And food by Egyptian Tummies!



OTHER NEWS & UPDATES

CRAG's updated Sri Lanka Country Information report

See below links to the latest version of CRAG's Sri Lanka Country Information report and briefing note, with new information on the current situation in Sri Lanka. Please share with anyone who may be assisting Tamil refugees and people seeking asylum.

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Briefing Note: <http://craggeelong.com/wp-content/uploads/2025/03/Briefing-Note-March-2025.pdf>

Senator Shoebridge calls for Medevac Bill

This is an excerpt from an email from Senator Shoebridge's office in March 2025:

Senator Shoebridge also tabled new legislation to re-introduce Medevac so that critically ill Refugees in offshore detention can come to Australia to access life-saving care.

We know that there are still 40 people held in offshore detention in Papua New Guinea and 100 in Nauru, many of who have been there for a decade despite being in need of urgent medical treatment. Watch this video to learn more about Medevac here.

It's important to celebrate the wins as they come and show that there is a progressive majority in Parliament to make positive change whenever the Government is willing to act.

Many advocates are hoping that the Government will agree to medevac the 10 or so men in Port Moresby who are seriously unwell, but so far there is little indication that this is being considered.

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