

ARAN Update May 2026 - What's in this ARAN UPDATE?



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Concern about the growing rise of anti-immigration sentiment

The ongoing campaign for fairness and justice for refugees is now taking place in an environment of growing racism in Australia. With few policy ideas to offer, One Nation and the Coalition are competing to outdo each other in their scapegoating of migrants and refugees in an ugly race to the bottom. This demonisation, the characterisation of 'bad' migrants, and a narrative in which migrants are a drain on Australia, are all set to continue and intensify all the way to the next Federal election.

Australia's cruel treatment of refugees and people seeking asylum has been firmly rooted in racism. Our campaign for refugee rights is inherently also a campaign against racism - we need to look for, and create opportunities to call out racism and challenge the racist narrative. The strength of modern Australia is our multicultural and multi faith society.

PROGRESS ON PERMANENT VISAS

Good news for many, but some concerns

Many people who were in limbo for more than 13 years are being offered permanent visas, and at last can call Australia their home. However, for those who have not yet been offered to apply for the Resolution of Status (RoS) visa, it is an anxious time.

Important: If you know people in the 'Fast Track' group who have not yet been contacted by the Department, they should contact one of the government funded legal services for refugees: Refugee Legal (Vic, SA & NT), RACS (NSW & ACT), RAILS (Qld), Tasmanian Refugee Legal Service, or Circle Green (WA)

Campaign for People Still Denied Permanent Visas - 'Transitory' Group

Around 700 people including families are living in Australia on Bridging Visas, some for as long as 13 years, and it's time that they were also given permanent visas. Since offshore processing on Nauru and Manus Island recommenced in 2012, thousands of people were brought back to Australia, mainly for medical reasons. Most of these people have since been resettled in New Zealand, the US or Canada. With all of these resettlement programs now fully subscribed, the remaining 700 people have no safe resettlement options - this includes

young people who were held on Nauru as young children, and who have grown up here in Australia. It's time to give all of these people a safe future.



Ailin is a young person in the so-called 'transitory' group. She reached out to 50 different media outlets and won over the team at A Current Affair to share her story. She did an amazing job - watch [Ailin's Story](#)

Take Action: ASRC and Human Rights Law Centre joint petition - [Sign and Share the Petition action](#) ' Use the ASRC online email to send your message to your local MP: [Let Them Stay for Good Campaign](#)..

Family reunion issues

Many refugees who waited for more than a decade on temporary visas, now have the security of a permanent visa. However, for many who have partners, children or parents still in danger in home countries, or in precarious situations in countries where they are sheltering, there are still many uncertainties, and potentially profound disappointment and grief. For people who have already been living in uncertainty and separated from loved ones for more than a decade, the prospect of ongoing separation can be too much to bear.



Read more here: [Calls to change refugee reunification system that has separated family for 13 years - ABC News](#)

Take Action: Write a letter - see background info and suggested letter in the [ARAN Letter Kit](#) (May 2026)

Skilled Refugee Labour Agreement Pilot (SRLAP)

See new policy brief: [Kaldor Centre Policy Brief - Labour mobility for skilled refugees: Improving outcomes for regional Australia](#)

Regularisation Policy Paper

The Permanency and Family Reunion Network has produced a policy proposal, which is available at Australian Policy Online: [It's time for Australia to grant permanent residence for long-term refugees and people seeking asylum](#)

The proposal highlights the need for Australia to grant permanent residence for long-term refugees and people seeking asylum. The case for regularisation is a case for efficient use of government resources and for permanency and security for refugees and people seeking asylum who have been living with visa insecurity for a prolonged period. A small group is working on an advocacy plan to support this proposal. Contact [Caroline Fleay](#) if you would like more information.

LABOR CONTINUES DETERRENCE POLICIES AND LEGISLATION

The Albanese Labor Government has followed previous governments in passing legislative amendments to continue the harsh policies of deterrence - particularly directed at people who arrived by boat to seek asylum, continuing offshore processing on Nauru, and other measures. Since the High Court decision in 2023 which deemed indefinite detention unlawful, the Government has sought other means to punish people, and to deflect criticism from political opponents who trade on 'the fear of the other', especially non-citizens, and accuse the Government of being 'weak on borders'.

DENIAL OF WORK AND STUDY RIGHTS

Some Bridging Visas do not grant the right to work or undertake tertiary study. This means that unless people can work and support themselves and their families, they are entirely reliant on the goodwill of others. Labor's previously committed to fixing these restrictive visa conditions, but they haven't done it. Support the new: [ASRC Work Rights Campaign](#)

DEPORTATIONS TO NAURU

With indefinite detention no longer an option, the Government signed up to a 30 year deal with Nauru in October 2025, to accept people Australia cannot return to home countries (as this would be returning them to danger - known as refoulement under the UN Convention on Refugees) . [See ASRC media release 26 Nov](#). This can apply to any refugee or person seeking asylum who has been charged with an offence attracting a prison sentence of 12 months or more. The deal also applies to people who have served prison sentences. In effect, Australia has contracted Nauru to operate as a modern day penal colony. See [Open Letter](#) sent to the PM, Minister Burke and the Foreign Minister - signed by a number of ARAN member groups and associates

It is understood that so far 8 people have been deported to Nauru under the new arrangement. A failed appeal at the High Court - seeking a decision to prevent deportation on the grounds that the person would be at risk of serious illness or death due to pre-existing medical issues - has opened the way for many more people to be deported. It is anticipated the person who lodged the appeal, who has lived in Australia since 1990, and as many as 50 others who have 'removal notices' could be deported to Nauru in the near future. See further details in the ASRC media release: [TCXM v Minister for Immigration and Citizenship](#). There are very real concerns about how these people will be received in Nauru, and whether in fact many may be returned to danger from Nauru: The ABC reported that Nauruan President David Adeang said members of the NZYQ cohort, many of whom are refugees, could be returned to their home countries before the 30-year-long agreement with Australia lapses. [See ABC report here](#).

Take Action: You are encouraged to email your local MP and the Minister for Home Affairs Tony.Burke.MP@aph.gov.au to register your concern for the safety and liberty of those deported to Nauru, and your disapproval of the arrangement with Nauru to accept those we are refusing to resettle, and your concerns about misuse of your taxes. Write your own email - the ARAN Letter kit for October 2025 may be helpful (see [Letter Writing | Australian Refugee Action Network ARAN](#)) - or use the form email developed by the ASRC: [Stop the Deportations](#).

LEGISLATION IN MARCH TO BLOCK WOULD BE ASYLUM SEEKERS

The Migration Amendment (2026 Measures No 1) Bill - was brought to parliament on Tuesday 10 March and on Thursday 12 March, the new legislation was passed into law. Labor has been rightly condemned for scrambling together legislation which will prevent people from other countries where there is conflict (or other circumstances) from coming to Australia, because they may then seek asylum - even though they already hold approved temporary visas (eg tourist, business, student visas).

Under the new legislation, the Iranian soccer players who were offered asylum with much fanfare, would probably not have been allowed to enter Australia to play soccer, because they were coming from a conflict zone. The new law gives extraordinary powers to the Minister, who can refuse entry to temporary visa holders if it is deemed possible that they may claim asylum when they arrive.

Essentially, Australia is shutting the door on people who have legitimate claims for asylum, by preventing them from entering Australia. This means that Australia's only remaining process for receiving refugees will be through the highly selective and restrictive 'offshore' humanitarian visa program.

Take Action: Download the ARAN Letter Kit (March 2026) [Letter Writing | Australian Refugee Action Network ARAN](#) for suggestions about what to write to register your disapproval of this 'shutting of the door' on would be asylum seekers. The legislation is clearly not in line with our obligations under the UN Refugee Convention.



OFFSHORE PROCESSING

The Australian Government continues its unrelenting commitment to offshore processing. Despite calls from persistent calls to end the cruel regime which thwarts lawful attempts to seek asylum in Australia, the government just allocated nearly \$1 billion to fund cruelty and continue violating the right to seek asylum : see ASRC [MEDIA RELEASE: Offshore detention costs blow out by nearly \\$400 million as refugees are biggest losers in Federal Budget](#)

Senate Inquiry Into Offshore Processing Contracts

The Inquiry has received a large number of submissions, including the 126 published on the website: [Submissions – Parliament of Australia](#). While the Inquiry has a key focus on the contract arrangements for offshore processing, the vast majority of these submissions call for an end to offshore processing. ASRC had assisted people with lived experience to make a submission to the Inquiry. The ASRC, HRLC, RCOA and the Visa Cancellation Working all gave evidence at the hearing. See media release: [Senate inquiry hears renewed calls to dismantle offshore processing following evidence of abuse, corruption - Human Rights Law Centre](#) The committee will report in June on the findings for the Inquiry.

Update On Situation For Refugees Still In PNG - May 2026

The picture below is from an [article in The Conversation \(Nov 2024\)](#) .



Sr Jane Keogh and others have been working with contacts in the Department of Home Affairs, and have been able to advocate for more support for the 27 men still remaining in Port Moresby. These men were sent to Manus Island from July 2013 - that's 13 long years ago. 1,523 people seeking refugee protection in Australia were sent to Manus Island, and all of these have been refused permanent protection in Australia. Many have had their refugee claims

recognised, and the lucky ones have been granted refugee visas to live in Canada, the US or New Zealand. Some have returned to danger in their home countries, and some were brought to Australia for medical reasons - some of these people have been resettled in New Zealand. Now, just 27 men remain - and Australia refuses to resettle them, even the 9 who are in desperate need of mental health care. The cruelty continues. Some of the men now have families with local PNG women, and some of these will seek to settle permanently in PNG, For those who remain, there is difficulties getting work, and safety is an ongoing concern, as Port Moresby has very high rates of violent crime, and non-locals are particularly at risk. Employment opportunities are very limited. Find out more about the background to this shameful situation here:

<https://www.refugeecouncil.org.au/manus-island-report/2/>

You can help by donating to support the work of Sr Jane Keogh: Bank transfer: Account Name: Brigidine Sisters, BSB: 062904 Account number: 10602969 Include Reference: PNG Refugees.

Situation For People Arriving By Boat Taken to Nauru

The Australian Government continues to intercept boats carrying people seeking asylum, and they are taken to Nauru where their refugee claims are assessed. However, when people are found to be refugees there are no resettlement options available, and Australia refuses to resettle these people. It is understood there are around 100 people in this situation on Nauru. Most are living in the community, and are giving housing and a meagre allowance. Food prices in Nauru are very high, and people have insufficient food.

In July 2024 ASRC published a report: which outlines the health crisis for people held on Nauru: [CRUELTY BY DESIGN:](#)

Offshore processing is a policy failure, placing people at risk, and consigning them to potentially years of uncertainty, with now prospects for safe resettlement. We know this, and the Australian Government knows this, but still it continues. See detailed report by the Kaldor Centre (2021) [Cruel, costly and ineffective: The failure of offshore processing in Australia](#)

ACTIONS AND EVENTS - '13 Years Too Long' since July 19 2013

On 19 July 2013, in a last ditch effort and ill fated effort to win popular support, then PM Kevin Rudd declared that no one arriving by boat to seek asylum in Australia would be granted permanency. Since then thousands of people have suffered the horrors of offshore detention, have been separated from their loved ones for more than a decade, and still, a few hundred of these people who remain in Australia do not have permanent visas.

Save the date: ARAN ONLINE FORUM - Reflections on Offshore Processing 13 years on: What Now ? Tuesday 21 July 7.30pm AEST. Details and registration will be made available on the [ARAN Facebook page](#) by 20 June.

If your group is planning any actions for 13 Years Too Long, let us know by emailing: austrefugeenetwork@gmail.com

OTHER NEWS & RESOURCES

Refugee Week - 14 - 20 June - celebrating 1 million refugees since 1947. See more information here: [Refugee Week Poster - Refugee Week](#)

Sanctuary Runners: a RCOA initiative - People involved in Saturday morning parkruns might be interested to know about an initiative to involve refugees and people seeking asylum in this mainstream Australian activity. Paul Power, the CEO of the Refugee Council of Australia (RCOA) has established a Sanctuary Runners group in Auburn (Sydney), and it will be trialled in Adelaide on Saturday 20th June. A running group in Ireland originally set up "Sanctuary Runners" to include refugees in a mainstream community activity. Participants can run or walk. Read more about its introduction in a Sydney suburb close to a hub or people from refugee backgrounds and recent arrivals:

<https://www.refugeecouncil.org.au/sanctuary-runners-australia-about/>

Justice for Refugees SA is collaborating with the Salisbury Council in the northern suburbs of Adelaide and the local *Carisbrooke parkrun* to ascertain the viability of an on-going group of runners and walkers who would link with *Sanctuary Runners Australia*. The event will be held on World Refugee Day June 20th. The idea is being greeted with enthusiasm by the local councils, *Justice for Refugees SA*, *Circle of Friends Australia*, the *Australian Refugees Association (ARA)* and *Welcoming Australia*. Hopefully this inaugural parkrun

will be the first of many, leading to another Australian Sanctuary Runners group.

Film: [We Are Not Powerless](#) is now screening across Australia. **See dates and how to book a screening.** In December 2012, Muzafar Ali and his wife Nagina escaped the Taliban in Afghanistan. They found themselves living in Indonesia when Australia 'stopped the boats'. With a small group of refugees, they received a \$200 donation and founded a two-room school. Since then, the schools in Indonesia have grown and there are now over 1300 refugee students and 130 refugee teachers. The students are obtaining school leaving certificates and entering universities around the world. Alumni from the schools have spoken at the United Nations and become doctors, teachers and lawyers, and they are returning to support the schools in Indonesia, where many went to school for the first time in their lives. **The film:** This powerful, emotional and decades-long narrative, anchored by Muzafar and Nagina's love story, takes the audience inside the life of a refugee in a way that has never been captured before. [See more info here.](#) Enquiries to jolyon@cisarualearning.com

Exhibition resources - Rohingya Refugees - online resources available for your own local exhibition - see details here: <https://rohingyamakingamark.com/> Email creativeadvocacypartnership@gmail.com or arunn.jegan@sydney.msf.org

Study on Detention: effects on children and young people. If you know someone who was detained in Australia's onshore or offshore immigration detention system at any point during childhood, they may be interested in participating in this research. Participation is voluntary and confidential. For more information or to get involved, please visit www.theforgottenchildren.au.

Brief overview of Palm Sunday activities - see information here about [Palm Sunday actions - March 29, 2026](#) . If you organised activities on or around Palm Sunday and these are not included in the overview, please email details directly to Marie on info@refugeeadvocacynetwork.org.au and we have your action added to the overview.

NETWORK of LETTER WRITERS and LETTER WRITING GROUPS

Does your group write letters? Looking for ideas? Individuals and representatives from groups are welcome to join our discussion online 2nd



Wednesday each month, 7pm AEST. Get ideas for your next letter. See the ARAN website <https://aran.net.au/resources/letter-writing/> to see current and past Letter Kits. Email austrefugeenetwork@gmail.com.au if you would like to get the zoom link to attend.

A GOOD NEWS STORY !

Escape from the Taliban - ABC program: [ABC radio program Lailas story](#) . A heartening story of support through the Circle of Friends in Adelaide. Many Rural Australians for Refugees local groups are also supporting people to escape danger in Afghanistan.

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