



NEWSLETTER October 2022

## Dear Grandmothers and Friends

After 10 years of unwelcome, refugees are sending clear messages that they have had enough.

While grateful for the support they have had from advocates like Grandmothers for Refugees and others in the support sector, refugees this week took their appeals for justice and fairness direct to the Parliament.

Many are increasingly prepared to be seen and heard, taking direct action to have their claims recognised.

Labor's first Budget offered little to refugees already suffering here. Independent MPs Allegra Spender, Andrew Wilkie, Kate Chaney and Zoe Daniel reportedly called for urgent action on Labor's election promise to provide permanent protection for refugees and people seeking asylum who are currently subjected to 'cruel' temporary visas. Spender said 'people cannot afford to wait any longer. Check out the Budget analysis by Refugee Council of Australia, Kaldor Centre and ASRC.

The offer of resettlement in New Zealand is attracting few applications. The government is applying pressure with written reminders that any sent for offshore processing of their asylum applications will never be settled in Australia.

We look at the many unanswered questions making it difficult for traumatised people to make fully informed rest-of-your-life decisions on safe settlement in other countries.

Our newsletter aims to keep you informed with news we encourage you to share.



## SAME TIME, SAME BOAT, SAME POLICY

Why did some people arriving on the same boat end up on Manus or Nauru while others were sent to mainland Australia, were given temporary protection visas, and are now promised permanent protection?

This is the question about 80 Iranians and others seeking fair and equal treatment of their claims for asylum, took directly to the national capital on Budget Day.

They travelled from Melbourne, Brisbane, Sydney, and Adelaide. Many took their children to the rally. One speaker said she wanted her children to be able to "dream big".

Hear, hear!



## In the media

# Iranian refugees rally before Australian Parliament in Canberra

A number of refugees rally in front of the Australian Parliament Building in Canberra on Tuesday, October 25, 2022. Credit: SBS Persian



[\(Auto translation from the Persian original\).](#)

A number of Iranian refugees demonstrated before the Australian Parliament in Canberra (October 25).

Of the approximately 19,000 refugees who arrived in Australia within a certain time limit, fewer than 1,000 who arrived in Australia within the same time limit were accidentally (sic) sent to Australian offshore facilities specially for refugee detention, they say.

"In order to make them a lesson for all the seekers of the system, they have been used for political purposes," the group said.

These refugees include men, women and children of different nationalities.

Some have still been in detention for nearly 10 years, while some are living in the country under temporary visas.

They say they recently received a letter from the Home (Affairs) Office stating that they will never be permanently settled in Australia, while their friends who have been on the same boat have been granted permanent protection visas because they have not been dispatched to the islands by the Decision of the Australian Immigration Service. ##

## Budget October 22 - What was in it for refugees?

### Funds for language classes, visa processing dwarfed by more millions on offshore processing

**Refugee Council of Australia** (RCOA) has reportedly welcomed the Albanese Government's increased Budget investment in the Adult Migrant English Program (AMEP), faster visa processing and support for temporary entrants from Ukraine but these allocations have been dwarfed by a \$150 million increase in funding for the Government's offshore processing regime.

Read RCOA full media statement here: [BUDGET 2022: Funds for language classes and visa assessment dwarfed by extra spending on offshore processing \(refugeecouncil.org.au\)](https://www.refugeecouncil.org.au/press-releases/budget-2022-funds-for-language-classes-and-visa-assessment-dwarfed-by-extra-spending-on-offshore-processing)

### “Budget of failed expectations” says ASRC

The 2022-23 Federal Budget failed to live up to the public expectations for a more compassionate and fair country for refugees and people seeking asylum.

ASRC is deeply disappointed that key Australian Labor Party commitments have not been met in this budget, including increasing humanitarian intake, abolishing Temporary Protection Visas/Safe Haven Enterprise Visas and providing appropriate social services for people seeking asylum.

This highlights the need for the Albanese Government to meet the public's expectations, its election promises and repair the damage done over the previous decade in the May 2023-24 budget.

#### Key Points

- No increase in social support for people seeking asylum
- No increase in the humanitarian intake
- Increase spending on offshore and onshore detention
- Increased funding for women on temporary visas facing domestic and family violence
- Lack of needed reform to address refugee visa backlog

Read ASRC full media statement here: [ASRC's response to the 2022-23 Federal Budget: A Budget of failed expectations - Asylum Seeker Resource Centre](https://www.asrc.org.au/press-releases/asrcs-response-to-the-2022-23-federal-budget-a-budget-of-failed-expectations)

### Kaldor Centre Budget Analysis

- **Ongoing commitment to offshore processing**
- **No change to humanitarian visa program**

The Albanese government's first federal budget committed new funds to speed up visa processing, support people fleeing the war in Ukraine, improve English language programs, expand Pacific labour schemes, and review of Australia's multicultural policy settings.

The new government noted its ongoing commitment to offshore processing, which will cost more than \$632 million this financial year. Money was also budgeted to establish a network of Australian Border Force officers across the Pacific.

The budget showed no change to the humanitarian visa program, which will remain at 13,750 places in 2022/23, with additional places for Afghan refugees (16,500 over four years). Additional places for community sponsorship also were not included in this budget.

Read the Kaldor Centre's full analysis here: [October 2022 Budget: What it says about refugee issues | Kaldor Centre \(unsw.edu.au\)](https://www.kaldorcentre.unsw.edu.au/press-releases/october-2022-budget-what-it-says-about-refugee-issues)

Read Department of Home Affairs detailed Budget here: [Home Affairs PBS October 2022-23 Final.pdf](https://www.homeaffairs.gov.au/press-releases/home-affairs-pbs-october-2022-23-final)



## ANSWERS NEEDED ON TERMS OF THE NZ SETTLEMENT OPTION

In the six months since it was announced that resettlement in New Zealand would be an option for those denied settlement in Australia, virtually no information has been provided to those eligible to express interest. It is not surprising that many have lost faith in the process. As few as 30 applications may have been lodged although 150 places are available for this year and each of the next two years. It is unreasonable to expect people to make such significant decisions without the information they need to make an informed decision.

- Refugees who may be eligible for resettlement in New Zealand need to have information about:
  - The timeframe for decision-making, and how communications will be maintained throughout the process. Ideally a specific and consistent contact person would be available for each person involved in the process.
  - The settlement supports provided by New Zealand, including housing and employment assistance, income support, access to education ( for children and adults)
  - The conditions of the visas that would be issued by New Zealand, and the pathway to citizenship
  - The opportunities for family reunion and relevant timeframes – once the person has settled in New Zealand.
- While New Zealand may well provide a positive resettlement experience for many people who are eligible, it may not be a viable option for some, including:
  - Those who have immediate family members here, including Australian born children for whom resettlement in New Zealand would mean family separation
  - Those who are receiving medical treatment where there would be risks or disadvantages in making the transition to the New Zealand medical system
  - Those who have established businesses here in Australia over the last seven years – it would be unreasonable to ask them to abandon their business here and start over in New Zealand.
- Those who have other strong connections or supports in Australia which would be difficult to replicate in New Zealand
- For some people, New Zealand will provide a positive option for resettlement. However, when interacting with those who have been subject to long term detention and appalling indignities in the offshore regime and subsequently here in Australia, Home Affairs needs to adopt a more sensitive approach which acknowledges their suffering and potential vulnerability. It is important to understand that their experiences have led to a lack of trust in the Australian Government, and for some, a loss of confidence and hope. All communications need to encourage a sense of agency and empowerment – the somewhat threatening tone in the recent letter was not appropriate, and only adds to the trauma already inflicted on these people by the actions of the Australian government. We owe a debt of kindness to these people.
- Also, it is time for Australia to consider offering permanent resettlement to those for whom resettlement in New Zealand is not a viable option. While we understand there may be some political concerns about doing so, it would be possible to resettle people without fanfare. Given the lack of traction gained by the Coalition's last-ditch attempt to politicise the refugee issue (by publishing details of a boat arrival on election day), Labor should consider making decisions based on decency and compassion rather than political calculation for those who have now suffered for years under asylum policies designed for political outcomes.

**Call to action>>> Write to your MP and Senators about the need for full information on NZ option.**

**Find your local MP >>> Use the search here:**

[https://www.aph.gov.au/Senators\\_and\\_Members/Members](https://www.aph.gov.au/Senators_and_Members/Members)

## UPCOMING EVENTS



### **RALLY: MELBOURNE**

**Saturday 5 November  
2pm, State Library**

#### **No one left behind: permanent visas for refugees**

##### **End the flawed fast track assessments**

- Permanent visas for all refugees and people denied protection under this unfair system

**There are 19,000 refugees living in Australia on temporary protection (TPV) or Safe Haven Enterprise (SHEV) visas.**

**Another 10,000 people denied protection under the Coalition's fast-track system – that is neither fair nor fast – are living on even more precarious bridging visas.**

People have been left in limbo for 10 years. PM Anthony Albanese made a commitment to make sure there was "no one left behind" in Australia but this week's Budget offered nothing. Labor must act now to ensure 31,000 people have permanent visas to ensure safety and stability for all members our communities. ###

### **REPORT ON RAC FACT FINDING MISSION TO INDONESIA**

**Tuesday 8 November, 2pm on Zoom**

Margaret Sinclair, RAC Victoria, recently visited Indonesia with Ian Rintoul of RAC, Sydney. They met with refugees and people still hoping for asylum in Australia but remain stranded there for a decade or more.

In this online information session with Margaret Sinclair, G4R members will hear first-hand evidence of the dire situation of refugees stranded in Indonesia and the lack of support afforded them by both the Australian Government and UNCHR.

**Register your interest now by email to**

**[info@grandmothersforrefugees.org](mailto:info@grandmothersforrefugees.org)**

**Subject: Indonesia Facts**

**and the zoom link will be sent to you.**

### **CANBERRA CONVERGENCE**

**Tuesday 29 November  
11am, Parliament House Lawns**

#### **Permanent visas for all refugees Let's make sure no one is left behind**

Labor was elected with a commitment to granting permanent visas for all those refugees currently on TPVs and SHEVs.

However, five months after the election, more than 19,000 refugees on Temporary Protection Visas and Safe Haven Enterprise Visas, and thousands more on bridging or expired visas, are deeply disappointed that the election commitment has not yet been honoured.

The Canberra Convergence will call for >>>

- An immediate announcement on when permanent visas will be granted to those on TPVs and SHEVs
- Pathways to permanency for all people seeking asylum who are currently on Bridging Visas, including the Medevac refugees and others brought from Nauru and PNG who are now living in Australia
- Review of all 10,000 refugee determinations rejected under the Fast Track system, and the thousands of others in the community on bridging or lapsed visas
- Provision for those still held on Nauru and in PNG to 'wait in Australia' for resettlement options
- Commitment to the resettlement of refugees stuck in Indonesia
- Commitment to raising the refugee quota to at least 30,000 and an immediate intake of 20,000 Afghan refugees
- Established pathways and special quotas (similar to that offered to Ukrainians) for all people escaping crisis situations – eg, Iranians fleeing state repression, or Myanmar refugees escaping the military dictatorship.

**PLAN TO BE THERE – representatives  
from all in the support sector are asked  
to stand with refugee communities at  
the **Canberra Convergence** on  
**29 November 2022****



#### CONTACT WITH MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT:

**Deakin, Kooyong & Casey** members met with staff at Senator Ciccone's office, the staff offered to research the issues raised and report back. Casey's meeting with Senator White was cancelled due to her Canberra parliamentary duties however, questions had been forwarded to her office. **Flinders** is arranging to meet their local member. **Cooper** coordinators met with Ged Kearney's staff member who is taking the lead on refugee matters.

#### LETTER WRITING:

**Deakin** members found the ARAN kit useful. **Flinders** letter writing is ongoing. **Curtin** wrote to Senator Lines and Clare O'Neil, both with unsatisfactory replies. **Cooper** held two successful letter writing activities, one with **Jaga Jaga** and the other within their group. They also established a "letter bank" of letters written by members.

#### REFUGEE SUPPORT EVENTS:

Weekly vigils were held in **Casey**. **Greater Perth** members attended an Open Gardens fund raising event for people seeking asylum. **Higgins** showed the film, "Journey Beyond Fear," selling 102 tickets and raising \$1,042.00 for BASP and ASRC. **Curtin** members visited a multi-cultural area of the electorate and spoke to a number in the community, about the plight of refugees.

#### ENGAGEMENT WITH OTHER REFUGEE SUPPORT GROUPS:

**Higgins** members attended the BRASA event which raised awareness about the suffering of refugees in Indonesia and sold the refugees artworks. **Casey** members attended a BBQ for Karen refugees organised by RAR Healesville. **Cooper** coordinators met with ASRC to plan a workshop.

#### MEETINGS:

Most groups reported that they had met. **Dunkley** now has 31 members and decided at this stage not to support the CRISP project. Two **Deakin** members researched the Back Your Neighbour campaign as a likely source for a speaker. **Flinders** is arranging its next meeting to be in Mornington and is discussing how best to inform the community about refugee issues. **Curtin** had as their guest speaker, the refugee activist, Dawn Barrington.

#### EFFECTIVENESS OF ACTIVITIES:

**Flinders** has the challenge of being a small group residing in different communities. **Cooper** had a positive response to their survey, which disclosed group diversity and commitment, has a positive ongoing relationship with MP's office, a well-attended and committed letter writing experience with Jaga Jaga and within their own group and members were grateful for good communication within the group.

#### PLANNED ACTIVITIES:

**Dunkley:** Attendance at a Twilight Market or stall at local library, distribution of bookmarks, establish links to ASRC and local churches. Research local markets and their insurance requirements, continue letter writing utilising the ARAN kit.

**Casey:** Development of community presentation, and a group action plan. A fundraiser lunch for Pakistani flood victims. In 2023, outdoor activism via markets and street stalls and meeting with LNP Federal member.

**Cooper:** Utilise existing groups and establish groups for activities based of their action plan, speaker from ASRC to conduct workshop, further letter writing, either home based or at different libraries followed by coffee shop/street chat and distribution of bookmarks.

**Flinders:** Consolidation of different area groups, arrange for sharing of tasks when coordinator unavailable and seek out other refugee advocacy groups, in the electorate.

**Deakin:** Arranging a meetings schedule into 2023, locating meetings in public places and possibility of shared activities with Casey.

**Curtin:** Talk by a member to the new Freemantle group, invite Anna Copeland to speak at November meeting regarding legal issues for detainees, join a vigil with **Freemantle** on Human Rights Day and letter write to all Federal ALP members asking them to abide by the ALP platform of treating refugees with dignity and respect.

#### IDEAS BREWING:

Setting up of a writing group with a list of issues to address to MP. Joint meetings with other groups with guest speakers. Rotating of meetings to enable more members to participate. Exploring ways to include members who cannot easily participate in activities. Reaching out to other refugee action groups in an electorate. Regular meetings with MP and MP staff.

## OUR MOVEMENT is GROWING and CHANGING



Over almost five months now, we have been reporting that word is spreading in the south of WA regarding Grandmothers activities. Greater Perth explored the foundation of a Fremantle branch and it is gaining new members almost on a daily basis. Inevitably, Greater Perth has lost members to Fremantle but is hopeful that a separate Perth electorate branch can be formed soon. Curtin is also up and running.

Each of the three groups now active in WA has taken up the invitation to join the renamed Electorate Representative Committee (ERC). This is a name change for what has been called the Co-ordinating Committee. The new name more accurately reflects the intent – that electorates have a regular opportunity to:

- hear first-hand about current issues,
- share ideas on effectiveness,
- contribute to decision-making, and
- directly report back on shared information and ideas to their local groups and communities.

The post-election growth in WA has prompted a review of our Executive structure. It has been decided that the recent vacancy on the Executive be filled, by invitation, by a representative selected by the WA electorate groups.

This national growth 'out west' as prompted us to look again to our north. We are also reaching out to Grandmothers for Refugees NSW where Greater Sydney, Blue Mountains and Newcastle groups have been independently organised and active for many years.

In the changed context of a new – and more approachable – Government and Parliament, there is a view emerging that the time may be right to consider whether we can be more effective in a closer structural arrangement, involving participation by NSW Grandmothers in both the national Executive and the Electorate Representative Committee. There will be discussions in coming weeks.

We also are poised to welcome a new Grandmothers for Refugees group in the Victorian electorate of Hotham, held by Home Affairs Minister Clare O'Neil. Executive member, Virginia Schneiders, has been working hard to connect members there, and in the neighbouring electorate of Isaacs. Other local groups have offered to support the new Hotham group at their inaugural meeting next month. We wish them well - and have a place set for them at the Electorate Representative Committee zoom table!

### Finally...

The Executive group has been working on fresh resources suitable for our revised strategic focus on community education. In addition to our recent production of bookmarks for distribution through libraries, schools, and bookshops, we are set to print A4 posters suitable for local community notice boards. Janet Joss has also been working on a presentation pack for use by electorate groups with speaking engagements at Rotary, Neighbourhood House, U3A, and other local community group meetings. It will be piloted soon and available to all electorate groups in 2023.

**It is important that we keep up our advocacy with and for refugees. Their needs have not been addressed. They need us as much as ever. Let's stay the course with them.**

**Jean, Margaret, Janet, and Virginia**