



NEWSLETTER February 2022



Dear Grandmothers and Friends

You may recall that our final edition for 2021 had an optimistic view of how we would prepare for what is to be a big election campaign period: *“A new year calls for rest and recovery. Please stay with us in 2022 as there is so much more to do.”*

The very little time we had for recovery is summed up in one word – **DJOKOVIC!!**

The 6-day detention of the tennis star in the same Melbourne hotel as 30+ refugees (who have been locked up for almost 9 YEARS) created an opportunity to take our campaign to the world.

Grandmothers and Frogs were quick to rally at the Park Prison Hotel. They urged the international media to look behind Djokovic and see Australia’s ongoing cruelty to refugees.



made me thankful. Not the statistics on it of course but that there are people trying to help and make a difference. Thank you.

Responding quickly to this issue has brought us new members daily, including some from interstate. In early February we had a “Welcome” for them on Zoom. Others are re-booting their active involvement. We are now in full swing, determined to win justice for refugees. **Welcome to 2022: year for change!!**

Djokovic freed to live his life ... now

FREE THE REFUGEES

The prison hotel detention of **Novak Djokovic** is just the tip of the iceberg when it comes to the application of our harsh Migration Act. It is designed to keep innocent people in immigration detention *without end*.

The celebrity tennis player was freed to get on with his life after just **six days and two court hearings**.

Innocent people seeking asylum have been held for **more than 3100 days with no court hearing or end date to their detention**.

The world stopped to watch when Djokovic was sent to the Park prison hotel. *Who will keep watch until there is freedom for the refugees?*



It is not illegal to be a refugee.

Indefinite detention of people fleeing war and persecution is not a plan. Being deliberately cruel to one unfortunate group so that others will not attempt to come here is crude marketing.

A policy that relies on cruelty is inhumane and discredits all Australians.



Defence estimates estimate about 93 men

A hastily called meeting of the Coordinating Committee agreed that we needed a flyer to inform our local communities on the bigger issues behind the detention of a single celebrity. We decided not to distribute the flyers at the Australian Open (due to Covid risks) but to stick to our strategy of targeting local neighborhoods. 13,000 flyers were letterboxed.

One householder contacted us by email: *I just wanted to let you know your flier in my letterbox*

OUR 2022 PICTURE GALLERY is already filling with action images of Grandmothers for Refugees ramping up their messaging to the politicians who put personal power before humanity.



Not sure what the collective noun is for a gathering of Grandmothers!! But here they are outside Josh Frydenberg's office yesterday (Friday 18 Feb).

This photo, along with my message, has had quite a response on Twitter. Over 14,000 views since last night and will get many more today. I've labelled it in my Kooyong Grandmothers file, but they had support from other groups.

Linda (Exec & G4R Twitter Handler)

We have a G4R Flying Squad of members in "safe seats" who are willing to join in spreading the message in marginal and targeted electorates. But local is always best. So, if you are in *Chisholm, Deakin, Dunkley, Flinders, Casey, Higgins, Goldstein* or *Kooyong* please get in touch and we will connect you with your local G4R Co-ordinator.

Email us at info@grandmothersforrefugees.org



There's a vigil chant in that pic (left), isn't there?

'GRANDMOTHERS SAY: WE ALL KNOW. COALITION: TIME TO GO!'

- Refugees
- Climate action
- Our environment
- First nations people
- Women's safety
- Government accountability
- Government transparency

Connecting the generations

We are preparing a flyer with messages that resonate with first-time voters and the issues they hold top of mind. **Grandmothers and Frogs may have young people in their lives who will be voting for the first time in 2022.**

We are interested in your ideas (and especially theirs) on how to connect with first-time voters around their issues and those affecting refugees.

SIGNS OF OUR TIMES



Past. Present. Future?

Goldstein Grandmothers (above) with support from their sisters in Cooper electorate found encouragement in the 'closing down' signage neighbouring the office of Tim Wilson MP (Lib). A creative mind could not resist reminding us of other pic opportunities where the signs spoke volumes..



Executive member **Jane Touzeau** (left) takes the Grandmothers' message into The Freedom Cage installed outside the notorious Park Prison Hotel in Melbourne.

Sunday vigils 3-4pm are continuing to be led by grandmothers so please join as and when you can.

4 YEARS OF TRAUMA FOR BILOELA FAMILY

Snatched from their beds in the early morning of 5 March 2018, the Murugappan family has become the symbol of all that is inexplicably cruel about Australia's refugee policy.



In the four years since being taken from their small Queensland hometown of Biloela, the family has been loaded onto a plane for deportation only to be offloaded in Darwin under requirements of a court order.

Rather than allow the family to return home to 'Bilo' while the courts dealt with their appeal against a forced return to unsafe Sri Lanka, Nades, Priya, and their Australian-born girls Kopica and Tharnicaa were then imprisoned on Christmas Island. Millions of dollars were spent on re-opening the island detention centre and for years these four were the only inmates.

Following the emergency evacuation of Tharnicaa to a Perth hospital, the family is now in community detention in WA, still denied the humane option of return to their home in Biloela.

Nothing the parents have done since arriving separately by boat in Australia would suggest this family represents a risk to the safety of Australians. The two little girls were born here, under the Southern Cross. They have a claim on us and challenge our own claims to be a humane society.

On 5 March 2022, please remember the Biloela family and do something, however small, to help set them free.

Are you a Westpac customer having difficulty making a donation?

We became aware over the Christmas-New Year break that some members and friends wanting to financially support Grandmothers for Refugees were having difficulty transferring to our bank account. We were losing valued donations.

Lengthy enquiries found that Westpac had blocked transfers to the G4R account, apparently doubting that we were a legitimate entity. Multiple attempts to talk to Westpac about the issues were futile.

A formal complaint to the Australian Financial Complaints Authority, however, managed to sort out the issue. It included compensation of \$500, which we happily accepted.

2022 CAMPAIGN FUNDS NEEDED

A special 'thank you' to those who have successfully made donations in support of our advocacy for refugees. Such gifts are always welcome.

Funds donated are used for printing materials used in local communities and at major rallies advocating for refugees.

Donations may be made by direct funds transfer to our NAB bank account:

**Name: Grandmothers for Refugees
BSB: 083170
Account No: 83 813 3480**



Please note that donations to G4R are NOT tax deductible.

UPCOMING ONLINE EVENT

10 MARCH 1pm

**Grandmothers for Refugees NSW
Online
10 March 1 - 2 pm**

**Lisa Burton & Nicole Watkins
COMMUNITY SPONSORSHIP**



Community
Refugee
Sponsorship
Australia

gfrnsw.org

Lisa Burton Chief Executive Officer & Nicole Watkins, Community Development Manager from Community Refugee Sponsorship Australia will talk to us about CRSA. This event will be a zoom meeting and interactive. You will have the opportunity to ask questions directly of the speakers.

Community sponsorship of refugees offers a way to unlock the goodwill of ordinary Australians to help refugees successfully settle and integrate into their new local communities and supplement the government-led resettlement program.

Register in advance for this meeting.

<https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZEudEurpz0jHdwuWLUnefkQcksjZnyg9rin>

After registering, you will receive a confirmation email containing information about joining the meeting. Meeting reminders will be sent closer to the date.

The calendar for more upcoming NSW Grandmothers' events is on the website gfrnsw.org.

TURN OUT FOR REFUGEES SYDNEY RALLY

Sunday 20 March, Sydney Town Hall 2pm



JUSTICE FOR REFUGEES RALLY SYDNEY

Our SYDNEY protest will be part of a **global day of action** against racism and for refugees—to mark the UN day for the elimination of racial discrimination.

PALM SUNDAY WALK, MELBOURNE JUSTICE FOR REFUGEES

Sunday 10 April 2022 2pm, State Library, Swanston St

Sr Brigid Arthur (below) addresses the 2021 rally in Melbourne





International Women's Day
Tuesday 8th March | 6pm AEDT

WOMEN ON THE FRONTLINES

A conversation with women
on the frontlines of gender
rights and refugee
humanitarian support.



Naomi Steer
Australia for
UNHCR,
National Director

Gillian Triggs
UNHCR Assistant
High Commissioner
for Protection

Yalda Hakim
BBC Journalist

**Mariam
Veiszadeh**
Lawyer and Human
Rights Champion

**Deborah
Knight**
Journalist
and Host

Date: Tuesday 8th March, 2022

Time: 6pm - 7pm AEDT

Ticket price: \$50 per person

Webinar link: Included on the registration confirmation email

REGISTER NOW

Hope you can join us.

The Events Team at Australia for UNHCR

Why not start thinking about how your G4R group will celebrate International Women's Day 2022? Let us know your plans and we will share them in the next Newsletter.

Finally...

We are waiting on the delivery from our printer of 16,000 new flyers and another 16,000 Report Cards on the Morrison Government for letterboxing in our marginal and targeted electorates.

Just a note on letter boxing: **our material is not junk mail and may be posted in all letterboxes except those marked “Australia Post Only”.**

In our next edition we would like to feature your local pics, ‘in brief’ letters, and comments. So please send them to info@grandmothersforrefugees.org.

As we sign off this edition, Grandmothers are dismayed and disappointed to see the impacts of Russia’s invasion of Ukraine. One sure result of this abuse of might and power is the displacement of people from their home country and an inevitable addition to the global numbers of refugees.

In solidarity,

Jean, Margaret, Linda, Jane and Gill.