



NEWSLETTER July 2021

Dear Grandmothers and Friends,

It is likely that this edition of G4R news finds many of you in Covid-19 lockdown.

This most recent virus outbreak curtailed plans to mark the eight years since the 19 July 2013 decision to permanently deny asylum to refugees arriving in Australia by boat.

In this newsletter we track key events over these eight years of trauma for refugees and shame for Australia.

We have had some success in the past month in meeting Parliamentarians so we give you feedback on those meetings.

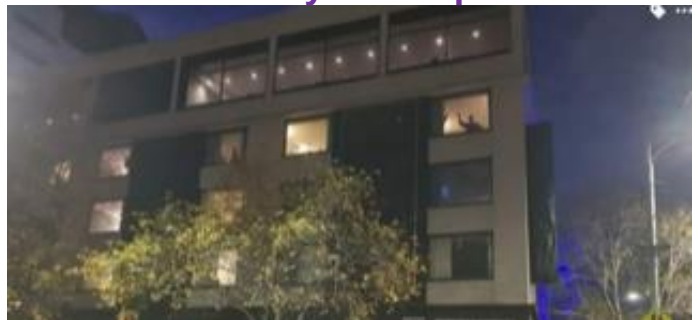
We maintain a watch on the money being wasted by the Commonwealth on punishing refugees through contracts such as the Canstruct deal we identified in May. We have more on that.

There are pics from the highways and byways where Grandmothers and Friends maintain vigils and community awareness raising around current issues... and a song for our times.



Le nonne per i rifugiati
Γιαγιάδες για προσφύγες
难民的祖母
جدات للاجئين

CALL TO ACTION>>>
WHEN COVID RESTRICTIONS EASE
Grandmothers and Friends are needed
at
The Park Prison Hotel
Sundays at 3-4pm



Grandmothers for Refugees have been asked to be the core presence at the prison hotel site each Sunday afternoon.

Please join the action to support the men still inside and show them that they are not forgotten.

Every Sunday 3-4pm
Swanston St and Lincoln Sq, Melbourne

Visit our website today www.grandmothersforrefugees.org

A TIMELINE OF TRAUMA AND SHAME NOW ENTERING A 9TH YEAR

19 July 2013 –

PM Kevin Rudd announces anyone who comes by boat to seek asylum will “never, ever” be settled in Australia. Deal done to send them to Manus Island, PNG.

August 2013 –

Deal done to send boat arrivals to Nauru.

7 September 2013 –

Abbott Government elected. Scott Morrison becomes Minister for Immigration and Border Protection.

October 2013 –

Temporary Protection Visas (TPVs) abandoned by the Labor Government are reintroduced as a mechanism to avoid granting permanent protection as set out in the Refugee Convention to which Australia is a signatory. Offshore detention continues on Christmas Island, Manus Island and Nauru.

April 2014 –

Numbers of men, women, families and unaccompanied minors reach their peak: 1273 on Manus; 1177 on Nauru. Many recognised as refugees.

December 2014 –

Peter Dutton becomes Minister for Immigration and Border Protection (later renamed Home Affairs).

April 2016 –

Coalition government continues to reject the 2013 offer made by NZ to take 150 refugees each year, citing NZ as a back door for entry to Australia.

November 2016 –

PM Turnbull makes a resettlement deal with President Obama for Australia and the US to swap 1200 unwanted refugees.

December 2017 –

Peter Dutton becomes Minister for Home Affairs.

March 2018 –

Murugappan family taken from Biloela to detention in Melbourne.

August 2018 –

Malcolm Turnbull replaced by Scott Morrison as Prime Minister. 5yrs of misery continues for refugees and people seeking asylum.

November 2018 –

#KidsoffNauru campaign succeeds at last. PM Morrison again rejects NZ offer to take 150 refugees from Australia each year.

February 2019 –

Medevac legislation passes the Parliament.

March – October 2019

135 people transferred from Nauru and PNG for emergency medical treatment; held in hotels - Mantra, Melbourne and Kangaroo Point, Brisbane - used as “Alternative Places of Detention”.

August 2019 –



Murugappan family imprisoned on Christmas Island after plane taking them to Sri Lanka is forced by court to land in Darwin.

December 2019 –

Medevac Bill repealed. Men still in hotel prisons subject to delayed medical care, indefinite detention and many endure months locked in without access to fresh air.

2020 –

Covid 19 hits - adds to health risks for refugee and asylum seeker detainees; supporters maintain Covid-restricted protests outside APODs.

Sept 2020 –

Government starts releasing people from detention to live on bridging visas but without housing or any safety net income.

December 2020 –

60+ men moved from Mantra hotel to new Park Hotel prison in Melbourne.

January to April 2021 –

45 asylum seeker men released from Park Hotel Prison on Bridging Visas; more transferred in.

June 2021 –

14 detainees begin hunger strike in Melbourne. 4yr old Tharnicaa falls seriously ill on Christmas Island, evacuated to Perth; family reunited with 3-mth Bridging Visa but unable to go back to Biloela.

19 July 2021 – 8 years on and the trauma and shame continues

G4R meets with Sen Kristina Keneally: “Labor would do things differently”



Shadow Home Affairs minister Kristina Keneally has said a future Labor Government would act in its first year to move thousands of refugees in Australia from temporary to permanent protection visas.

In an online meeting earlier this month with Grandmothers for Refugees representatives from Victoria and NSW, Senator Keneally said Labor would also move early to resolve situations affecting

thousands in the “legacy caseload” and those others considered as having “no durable solution”. This latter cohort includes families and more than 180 children.

Labor policy is to take up the NZ offer to resettle 150 refugees each year. The **#gameover campaign** led by Craig Foster and Amnesty International promotes the NZ offer as the best chance of resettlement for those still held in PNG and on Nauru.

Senator Keneally said she was concerned about the loss of Federal Government support for detainees released into the community to find their own housing and work but with no access to safety net payments. She paid tribute to State Governments and charities who have taken on the burden of care while “the Federal Government uses cruelty to send a message to others.”

She expressed concern that Australians might lose their sense of compassion, risking a permanent change to Australian society. “My goal is to keep that part of the Australian community spirit alive and intact,” Senator Keneally said.

Senator Keneally has offered to meet with the wider membership of Grandmothers later in the year.

Meetings with Victorian Liberal Senators

Further meetings have been held this month with the retiring President of the Senate, **Scott Ryan**, and with an adviser to **Senator Jane Hume**. The conversation with Senator Ryan went ahead in confidence, at his request. The advisor said it was not in Senator Hume’s remit to be concerned about refugees. However, she would convey Grandmothers’ concerns to the Senator.

In summary, G4R representatives in these meetings found them not very fruitful when seeking to understand the Morrison Government’s plans for solving the dilemma of mandatory and indefinite detention despite eight years of trauma and hopelessness inflicted on people seeking safe haven in Australia.

Our repeated requests for a meeting with **Immigration Minister, Alex Hawke MP**, remain unanswered.



Canstruct International

Management



Canstruct is a facilities management, construction, and service provision company based in Brisbane, Queensland, Australia, with operations in the Pacific region. The company's headquarters is located at 769 Fairfield Rd, Yeerongpilly.



Wikipedia



Official site



LinkedIn

Remember Canstruct ?- The company making \$billions from making misery for refugees. On its website, plaudits from Home Affairs....

David Nockles

Contract Authority - Department of Home Affairs

“On behalf of the Department of Home Affairs we would like to pass on our sincere thanks to the management and staff of Canstruct International Pty Ltd for your professionalism and dedication to the delivery of services under the Nauru Garrison and Welfare Services Contract in the lead up to 30 April 2019.”

Liberal party donor’s revenue from uncontested contracts for offshore processing rises to \$1.5bn

READ ALL ABOUT IT >>>click here [The Guardian](#) Wed 21 July 2021

If you wish to let Home Affairs know what you think of this waste of taxpayer funds, please write respectfully to the Minister Karen Andrews at

karen.andrews.mp@aph.gov.au

In brief...

A second hunger strike is underway at MITA (Melbourne Immigration Transit Accommodation) centre in suburban Broadmeadows.

It is beyond tragic when men are rendered so powerless to change their situation that they resort to harming the only thing over which they have some control – their own bodies.

Private representations are needed on behalf of the refugees in MITA. Please do what you can by bringing this matter to the attention of your local MP.

PNG Bishops have written an open letter - “But you cannot think of keeping them here forever” ...

Under the current legislation, they have no right to be resettled in Australia. But they have no duty to live in Papua New Guinea either, unless that is their free choice. Australia forcing them to stay indefinitely on PNG soil against the wish of anybody here, contradicts the spirit of PNG self-determination. We believe it is time for Australia to erase any trace of past colonial demand and fully implement a new style of compassionate and participative leadership in the Pacific.

I can assure you that here in Port Moresby, not only us, but all those more involved in assisting the men affected by the current policy (particularly the PNG Immigration and the Australian High Commission) are all exhausted by the prolonged effort.

Please, close the Manus and Nauru chapter as soon as possible by allowing people who have sacrificed so much for your country, and whose acute suffering we see every day, to access a reasonable and acceptable level of freedom and dignity in Australia; specifically, those who have been in Manus and Nauru after 19 July 2013 and have no option for a third country of resettlement and, as we all well know, can't return to their home country.

Thank you very much for your attention.

Cordially,

REV. FR. GIORGIO LICINI, PIME

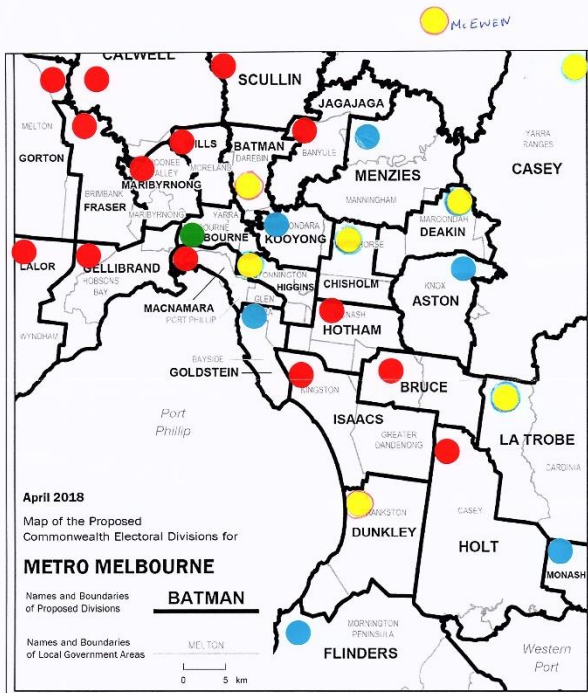
General Secretary, Catholic Bishops Conference of PNG & SI

Read the letter in full [on facebook](#).

The Australian government has been ordered to pay an Iraqi asylum seeker \$350,000 in damages for unlawfully detaining him for more than two years, following a legal battle that could set a precedent for similar cases. Alison Battison, director principal of the group Human Rights for All which ran the case, said the judgment was “incredibly significant” because unlike other detention cases before the high court, this case focused on the purpose of detention.

Read the full story [here](#).

AROUND THE ELECTORATES



This month, we send warm greetings to members in the **Dunkley electorate in Melbourne's south-east**. Grandmothers in neighbouring electorates have made a special effort to connect with those in Dunkley, inviting them to join the challenge of building community awareness about refugees and the need for change in refugee policy.

McEwen electorate, just north of metro Melbourne, is one of those affected by a boundary change. It now includes Woodend, previously part of the Bendigo electorate, and northern parts of Jagajaga.

If you are in **Dunkley or McEwen** and are willing to do more towards a change in policy and treatment of refugees, please don't hold back. Send us an email at info@grandmothersforrefugees.org and we will connect you with others in your area lobbying for justice for refugees.



Kooyong Grandmothers meet to finalise their electorate's federal election plan which includes providing critical support in neighbouring Chisholm, a very marginal seat held by Gladys Liu (Lib). Former Executive member, **Mary Williams**, is now living in Chisholm electorate and she is keen to hear from others willing to become more active as we move towards a federal election. Contact Mary via email to info@grandmothersforrefugees.org.

Visit our website today www.grandmothersforrefugees.org



Goldstein grandmothers know waste when they see it!



In Higgins, there is a lot of tooting outside the office of Katie Allen MP.



Cooper Grans prepare for another Sunday vigil outside the Park prison hotel in Melbourne.



Events upcoming in 2021

20 years since Tampa
26 August

Remembering 'children overboard'
8-10 October

Remembering SIEVX
20 October

Human Rights Day
10 December



Every day is an anniversary of sadness for those displaced and forced from their homes by fear and persecution.

Please remember to send regular messages to responsible Ministers for Home Affairs
karen.andrews.mp@aph.gov.au

and Immigration

alex.hawke.mp@aph.gov.au

to **voice your ongoing concern.**

G4R Planning for the next Federal Election is well advanced

Grandmothers for Refugees has always been a non-partisan political movement. But because successive governments have made the treatment of refugees and people seeking asylum a political issue, we actively engage with our voting communities and elected leaders.

Informed by more than 6 years of lobbying on behalf of refugees – especially the children and families, we have over several months been developing our objectives and plans for change at the next election due by May 2022.

Our Principal Objective:

To reset Australia's refugee policy to provide welcome, protection, and safe settlement and to be fully consistent with the Refugee Convention and Protocols and International Human Rights obligations.

To reach this objective we call for:

- **Immediate release from detention of all refugees and people seeking asylum.**
- **An end to mandatory detention of people seeking asylum, both onshore and offshore.**
- **Rights to apply for permanent protection and an end to all forms of temporary visas for refugees.**
- **Appropriate support for all refugees, people seeking asylum and their families living in community settings.**
- **Policies which assist refugees to reunite with their families.**

Our pre-election plans are locally developed within electorates. If you have been a quiet Grandmother or Friend in recent times, now is a good time to check in with us to see what you can do to stand with refugees.

Email us at info@grandmothersforrefugees.org, tell us your electorate, and we will put you in touch with your local co-ordinator.

Visit our website today www.grandmothersforrefugees.org

25 Bumper stickers up for grabs!

If you would like a **free** bumper sticker, send us an **email today with your name, postal address** and phone number (optional). **First in, first served...**



Contact us at
info@grandmothersforrefugees.org

Totes and Tees still on sale...

Grandmothers for Refugees advocates for compassionate welcome and safe settlement of all people seeking asylum. For every tee purchased, Das T-Shirt Automat will donate \$18 to Grandmothers for Refugees and \$9 for every tote.



Grandmothers For Refugees Tote
\$25



Grandmothers For Refugees Tee
\$40

Our website is the best way to place your order. Go to www.grandmothersforrefugees.org and scroll down on the Front Page. **Or click [here](#).**

Look out for us on social media>>>

Facebook:

<https://www.facebook.com/GrandmothersforRefugees/>

Twitter: https://twitter.com/gmothers_adrc/

Instagram: [@Grandmothers4Refugees](https://www.instagram.com/Grandmothers4Refugees)

[@Grandmothers4Refugees](https://www.instagram.com/Grandmothers4Refugees) • [Instagram photos and videos](#)

Finally, August 26th marks the 20th anniversary of the Tampa. DID YOU KNOW?

Tampa View is a short, quiet street on Christmas Island. Less than two hundred metres long, it ends at a sharp cliff descending into the Indian Ocean. When you stand at the end of the street you can see peaceful Flying Fish Cove, one or two boats dotting the ocean and, in the distance, Ta Jin House, which once accommodated the island administrator but is now a small museum.

Eight years ago, standing at Tampa View was a different story. **If you gazed out to the ocean, the MV Tampa and its human cargo were visible.** You would have seen the transformation of Ta Jin House into a SAS military base. The Cove during this time was flooded with international media while Christmas Islanders protested over the Howard government's treatment of the asylum seekers on board the vessel and detained on their own island.

Disgusted with the Howard government's handling of the Tampa affair, Christmas Islanders renamed one of their streets Tampa View. The memories of this event remain etched on the minds of those who protested against this pivotal event in Australia's political history. Recollections of the stand-off between the rescue endeavours of the Tampa captain and the hard-heartedness of the Howard government are still raw. From the archive [Let them land: remembering Tampa \(apo.org.au\)](http://apo.org.au) 2009

On that note...best wishes and stay safe, **Jean, Margaret, Jane, Linda, Gill, G4R Executive**