



## NEWSLETTER March 2021

Dear Grandmothers and Friends,

The month past has been a bitter/sweet time for detained refugees and their supporters.

The dozens of men released from hotel prisons are rightly celebrating their freedom. Many have moved in with family and friends, some moving interstate to do so. Their personal stories of feeling the fresh air and sunshine, of not being watched all the time, of being able to call a mother to say “I’m free” – these are the undeniably joyous moments.

The bitterness is being borne by those left behind. There are no explanations as to why some are out, and others remain inside like the 10 still in the Park Hotel, Melbourne. The lack of transparency and accountability hardens the cruelty that is the defining feature of the Morrison Government’s detention policy and administration.

At last, refugee voices are beginning to be heard in Parliament House Canberra. See our picture story.

In the meantime, Grandmothers are working within Covid safe restrictions to ramp up local activities that remind communities and polities of all persuasions that we have not dropped out of the quest for justice for refugees.



### IN BRIEF

**66 men were released** from hotel prison in Melbourne during the past month. □

**Releases from hotel prisons in Brisbane and Darwin** began late Feb/early March.

This leaves behind:

- 23 on Nauru
- 137 in PNG
- 10 still in the Park Hotel (Melbourne)
- 22 in MITA (Melbourne)
- 4 in Villawood (Sydney)
- 110 in BITA (Brisbane)
- 9 in Adelaide
- 2 in Perth
- 15 people (5 families) still imprisoned in Darwin for over a year, transferred after 6+yrs on Nauru.
- Biloela family still detained on Christmas Island since August 2019. □

**Two men have tragically died** since being sent to the US under the “never, ever” determination that none will be allowed to settle in Australia. □

**Tasmanian independent MP Andrew Wilkie has introduced a Private Members’ Bill** to end the mandatory detention of refugees. □

**Grandmothers for Refugees is strengthening nationwide** with new links to WA refugee activists lobbying for permanent visas and family reunions. □

**Palm Sunday is 28 March** and Justice for Refugees rallies are being organised with Covid- safe plans in place. □

**New T-shirts and Totes available now!**

Our new supplier Das T-shirts Automat has generously offered **a two-month offer of a donation from every sale.**

**See inside for details >>>>>**

Visit our website today [www.grandmothersforrefugees.org](http://www.grandmothersforrefugees.org)

## Refugee Voices starting to be heard in Canberra



 Thanush Selvarasa and Ramsiyar Sabanayagam endured indefinite detention for seeking asylum to avoid war. They are hoping to start a new life in Australia. Picture: Elesa Kurtz

Read the full story from the *Canberra Times*

<https://www.canberratimes.com.au/story/7145522/from-manus-island-to-melbourne-hotel-medevac-refugees-petition-for-release-of-detainees/?cs=18714>

### More voices raised in unison with refugees – and more needed!



**Thank you** if you were one of those who signed the “Time for a Home” Campaign petition.

**CALL OUT:** Grandmothers are encouraged to back up the petition message in letters to local MPs and Senators.

We need a permanent solution to the dilemma of 30,000 refugees living in precarious situations in Australia.

Temporary visas – TPV, SHEV, BVEs – are just kicking the can down the road.

The 30% drop in humanitarian places available to overseas applicants in 2020 can easily be filled by refugees and asylum seekers ALREADY HERE. Covid-19 international travel restrictions mean the 2021 allocation of another 18,750 can also be re-assigned to those already within Australia and seeking protection.

With no permanent solution for those who arrived by boat after 19 July 2013, the Morrison Government is creating an under-class of non-citizens and their permanently disenfranchised children who can only dream of freedom to study, work and a safe permanent home.

#timeforahome [www.timeforahome.com.au](http://www.timeforahome.com.au)



Greens leader Adam Bandt MP posted:

“We repeated calls from the Melbourne community to release the medevac refugees that have been locked in hotels for almost 18 months. **The pressure is working.**

“This week the ABC reported that 70 refugees are expected to be released across Darwin, Brisbane and Sydney! **Incredible news for activists and refugees who have advocated to make this happen.**

“Hundreds of refugees are still in detention across the country — 12 remain locked up in Melbourne’s Park Hotel.

“I’ll keep fighting until everyone is released, safe and settled in a permanent home.”



Labor, Independent and Greens MP’s and Senators declared where they stand on a permanent home solution for refugees.

Spot your MP here?

If not, please write or call to ask – ‘why not?’

*Postscript:* **Ramsiyar Sabanayagam** (fourth from right) **lost his job for taking this trip to Canberra** to talk with politicians. He had just moved to Sydney to live and find work after being released from more than a year in hotel prisons in Melbourne and 7 years on Manus and PNG. Ramsi, who freely and happily (and repeatedly 😊) **celebrated his 30<sup>th</sup> birthday last week** with friends in Sydney and Melbourne, now has work in a mega-market where he packs goods for distribution. He happily reports that he now has a Tax File Number. He also has a Bridging Visa E which says he has to leave the country within six months!

Ramsi is among the many refugees who speak fondly of the Grandmothers “because you always come out to support us.”. He asks that we don’t forget him.

**You can follow how Ramsi is getting on with life. Just search for his name on Facebook.**

Visit our website today [www.grandmothersforrefugees.org](http://www.grandmothersforrefugees.org)

## **Compensation for massive data breach**

**More than 9000 people seeking asylum, whose personal and sensitive data was published in 2014 on a federal government website, could receive compensation payouts from the Australian Government.**

The massive privacy breach created a risk to lives of asylum seekers if repatriated, and to their families left behind. The case was taken up by a pro bono partnership between Slater and Gordon and the Refugee Advice and Casework Service (RACS).

**The background story to the recent order for compensation is in this edited statement released by RACS.**

The Australian Government has been ordered to pay compensation to almost 1300 people seeking asylum after accidentally leaking their highly sensitive personal information in 2014.

In an Australian first, led by Slater and Gordon and the Refugee Advice and Casework Service (RACS) on a pro bono basis, the Australian Information Commissioner and Privacy Commissioner decided compensation should be paid for the mass privacy breach.

In February 2014, the Department of Home Affairs accidentally published on its website a report which provided access to a spreadsheet that included the personal information of thousands of people who were being held in immigration detention.

The data included names, dates of birth, citizenship status, location, boat arrival details and period of immigration detention.

**“This breach meant that any person searching the internet could access the personal information surrounding thousands of people applying for protection in Australia. This includes authorities and indeed even the**

**perpetrators of the persecution, in the countries from which they fled.**

Slater and Gordon Senior Associate Ebony Birchall said the ruling was an unprecedented decision which would assist almost 1300 vulnerable people whose privacy had been breached. Dr Birchall said it was the first time in Australian history that compensation has been ordered for a mass privacy breach.

“This is the most significant use of the representative complaint powers in the Privacy Act to date and appears likely to result in the largest compensation figure ever to be determined for a privacy claim in Australia,” Dr Birchall said.

“It is an important reflection of the fact that privacy breaches are not trivial or consequence-free mistakes, and that increasingly, individuals who suffer loss as a result of a breach should expect to be able to obtain redress.

“Organisations holding personal or sensitive data need to take their obligations seriously, and the presence of meaningful consequences and compensation rights following breaches is a significant development.”

RACS Centre Director and Principal Solicitor Sarah Dale said: “We are pleased to see it publicly recognised that the Department of Home Affairs breached the fundamental right to privacy of thousands of people seeking asylum in Australia.

“We also acknowledge, however, that no decision or result such as this will alleviate the distress caused to people who have already experienced so much pain,” Ms Dale said.

“For men, women and children already terrified of being returned to a country where they feared for their lives, this data breach caused huge anxiety, at a time when it was already at its peak.”

**People affected by the data breach can find further information on Slater and Gordon’s website: [www.slatergordon.com.au/data-breach](http://www.slatergordon.com.au/data-breach)**

## NEW TEES AND TOTES AVAILABLE NOW!

Our badge white on purple really stands out. And the tote is ideal for carrying G4R posters.

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

**Grandmothers for Refugees T-Shirt measurements**

| Size        | SML | MED | LRG  | XLRG | 2XL  | 3XL |
|-------------|-----|-----|------|------|------|-----|
| Width (cm)  | 47  | 52  | 56.5 | 62   | 64   | 68  |
| Length (cm) | 71  | 75  | 78.5 | 82   | 83.5 | 85  |

Order from <https://dastshirtautomat.com/grandmothers-for-refugees> or from our G4Rwebsite.

\*\*\* Items are printed on demand to minimise waste, so the production process may take up to 2 weeks. You will receive a notification as soon as your order ships or is ready to collect from a storefront.

Visit our website today [www.grandmothersforrefugees.org](http://www.grandmothersforrefugees.org)

## Higgins electorate Grandmothers mark International Women's Day 2021



Ruth Scharley, one of our **Higgins** members, organised an event for **International Women's Day 2021** where **Pamela Curr AM** spoke on her experiences with and stories of refugee women.

Photo shows Pamela (centre) with Ruthie and Carolyn Berger.



Eltham roundabout was a perfect pop-up site for **Jaga Jaga/Menzies G4R** and their 'Time for a Home' Campaign message...

... and here they are at the State Library rally during the week of action.

Photos Meg L'Estrange and Janine Lawrence



## Upcoming events In person....

### 28 March Palm Sunday Rallies



**Melbourne, 2pm**

State Library of Victoria, Swanston St

**Sydney, 2-4pm**

Belmore Park near Central Station

**For more information, resources and rally locations around the nation, go to the ARAN website**



<https://aran.net.au/campaigns/palm-sunday-2021/>

## ...and Online

**Friday 19th March 1-2pm**

**Live online with Daney Faddoul**

An event organised by Grandmothers NSW

**Daney Faddoul joined the Human Rights Law Centre in March 2020 and focuses on the campaign to create an Australian Charter of Human Rights and Freedoms.** Daney studied law at the University of Western Sydney. He is passionate about creating an Australian Charter of Human Rights and Freedoms.

Daney will talk about the Charter and how it will help prevent injustices, including the unjust treatment of refugees.

**You will need to pre-register for this event, click here: <http://bit.ly/2OyGhKS>**

**Tuesday 23 March at 7.30 pm AEDT**

Join Amnesty and ARAN for a special briefing event. Find out what justice for refugees looks like, what's happening to achieve this, and how you can be involved this Palm Sunday (28 March).

**[RSVP HERE](#)**

[Meeting Registration - Zoom](#)

## Resources

For those keen to learn more about the impact of temporary migration on the Australian economy, wages and jobs, social cohesion and workplace rights and conditions, check out this 2020 submission by **Refugee Legal** to the Senate Select Committee on Temporary Migration.



Submission 99.pdf

More resources are available on our website page.

## Making the future today

***Get to the Wire*** – Swinburne Uni student film production call out for talent.

Set 40 years in the future, the film tells the story of Farida, an Australian environmental refugee who is being held in a British immigration detention centre, separated from her child.



Casting Call  
Document .pdf

Visit our website today [www.grandmothersforrefugees.org](http://www.grandmothersforrefugees.org)

## Getting to know you

Members are encouraged to learn about upcoming local events and to connect with others in your electorate. If you get in touch with the Executive at [info@grandmothersforrefugees.org](mailto:info@grandmothersforrefugees.org) we will give you the contact details for your Federal Electorate G4R Coordinator.

Our website is the best way to stay updated on breaking news, events, and calls to action. Go to: [www.grandmothersforrefugees.org](http://www.grandmothersforrefugees.org)

Look for us also on social media

Facebook:

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

Twitter: [https://twitter.com/gmothers\\_adrc/](https://twitter.com/gmothers_adrc/)

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

[@grandmothers4refugees](https://www.instagram.com/Grandmothers4Refugees) • Instagram photos and videos

## Supporting G4R activities



Thank you to those who sent us a donation last month. They are helping to build a kitty for election campaign resources.

G4R does not run fundraising activities. However, donations are always welcome and may be made by direct funds transfer to our bank account:

Name: Grandmothers for Refugees

BSB: 083170

Account No: 83 813 3480

## Finally...on our watch list...

Independent MP, Andrew Wilkie, has introduced a **Private Member's Bill on Indefinite and Arbitrary Detention**. It has been referred to the Senate [Standing Committee on Social Policy and Legal Affairs](#).

With best wishes and looking forward to seeing you at the Palm Sunday rally,

From your Exec



Jean Ker Walsh  
Co-chair



Margaret Browne  
Co-chair



Jane Touzeau



Linda Sparrow



Gillian Meek

Contact us at [info@grandmothersforrefugees.org](mailto:info@grandmothersforrefugees.org)