



NEWSLETTER May 2021

Dear Grandmothers and Friends,

If you were among those of us hoping for a budgeted plan to end the cruel incarceration and treatment of refugees and people seeking asylum in the 2021-22 Federal Budget, you were again mightily disappointed.

Check out the Fast Facts (opposite) gleaned from the Government statements and see more inside for independent analysis.

Lifelong detention is not a solution

While the country was focused on The Budget and pandemic news this week, the Senate quietly dealt with legislation that caused alarm in the refugee support sector about deeper entrenchment of lifelong detention.

Compassionate Canada – a role model

Can community sponsorship Canadian-style be a genuine hope for future refugees seeking safe haven in Australia? See news of a review report from senior bureaucrat Alison Larkins and her correspondence.

Letters out and in

And we've had an exchange of correspondence with the new Home Affairs Minister.



CALL TO ACTION>>>
3-4PM SUNDAYS
PARK PRISON HOTEL

See you there...

Fast (Budget) Facts

- ⇒ **\$812m** will be spent on offshore immigration processing system next year.
- ⇒ Daily cost to taxpayers is **\$9,305** for each of the 239 people now held on Nauru (109) or PNG (130).
- ⇒ Canstruct, a Brisbane-based company with Liberal donor links, has been awarded contracts worth **\$1.4 BILLION** over the past 5 years to run offshore processing on Nauru. There have been many departures and no new arrivals since 2014!
- ⇒ **\$1.27 BILLION** will be spent this year on the onshore detention regime.
- ⇒ Onshore detention system now holds 1527 people, 442 of them tagged as Illegal Maritime Arrivals (IMAs). That's an annual spend of **\$83,170** per person.
- ⇒ **\$465m** will be spent this year on adding capacity to detention facilities, including Christmas Island.

Source: Department of Home Affairs Budget Statements, Refugee Council of Australia analysis and *Guardian Australia* reporting

Read the full Home Affairs Budget Statement here:
[2021-22 Home Affairs Portfolio Budget Statements](#)

Visit our website today www.grandmothersforrefugees.org

De-coding the Federal Budget 2021-22

In search of a coherent Plan in response to global displacement of refugees...

“Border security is also critical to maintain Australia’s sovereignty and security by ensuring that Australia’s border protection regime *continues to suppress the people smuggling threat through a robust commitment to maritime surveillance and response capability.*” (Italics added) Home Affairs Budget Statement p14

There is little in the Budget suggesting a humane response to the destitution inflicted on refugee and asylum-seeking families when forced onto bridging visas.

Department of Home Affairs Budget Statements

Services Australia

Program 1.1: Services to the Community – Social Security and Welfare

Contribution to Outcome 2 made by linked program

Services Australia supports individuals, families and communities to achieve greater self-sufficiency by providing access to payments and services on behalf of government. This includes providing assistance to people living in the community while their immigration status is resolved.

The **Kaldor Centre** has done an analysis on the budget and refugees: see it here.

<https://www.kaldorcentre.unsw.edu.au/news/how-australia%E2%80%99s-federal-budget-2020-21-impacts-refugees-and-asylum-seekers>

Offshore processing – Illegal Maritime Arrivals IMAs

‘IMA Offshore Management’. This item involves costs associated with holding asylum seekers and refugees in Papua New Guinea and Nauru, and includes the provision of ‘health, welfare and settlement services (as required)’; the provision of options for voluntary return to home countries; and the removal of those individuals whose claims for protection were unsuccessful. It also includes costs for ‘training and mentoring’ to support Nauru and Papua New Guinea in ‘the independent management of regional processing arrangements’.

Where the this item was originally budgeted for 2019-20 at **\$526 million**, the latest budget papers report a significantly increased actual expenditure of **\$961 million**. The budget for this item in 2020-21 is more than **\$1.186 billion**. This is despite the fact that there are only **a few hundred** people still held offshore. The projected costs for the following three years are just over \$300 million per year.

Onshore Detention - Onshore Compliance and Detention

Expenditure in 2020-21 is set at just over **\$1 billion**. This item includes voluntary return packages, and the management of onshore detention facilities. This year’s budget provides \$55.6 million to **‘reactivate’** the Immigration Detention Centre on Christmas Island. The facility is for up to 250 non-citizens classed as ‘high-risk detainees’, such as those released from prison ‘but unable to be deported due to COVID-19 restrictions’, will be transferred to this facility. #

Morrison government rushes through new laws that allow lifetime detention of refugees, says Human Rights Law Centre

The Government used the cover of Budget Week to pass legislation that the HRLC said would “allow it to lock up refugees in detention centres, potentially for the rest of their lives.

“The *Migration Amendment (Clarifying International Obligations for Removal) Bill 2021* targets refugees in immigration detention who cannot return to their home countries because of a risk of persecution or serious harm.

“While the new laws notionally provide protections against sending people to harm, the legislation actually gives the Minister a new power to overturn refugee status in breach of international law and contains no mechanism to prevent the indefinite detention of refugees who cannot be returned.

“The legislation is an attempt to shield the Morrison Government from legal challenges currently in the courts against lifetime detention of refugees,” HRLC said in a Media Release. <https://www.hrlc.org.au/news/2021/5/13/morrison-government-rushes-through-new-laws-that-allow-lifetime-detention-of-refugees>

Labor in the Senate supported the legislation saying it affected just 21 persons, and the Opposition had successfully negotiated several amendments to improve the legislation.

ALP Senator Murray Watt said Labor received assurances that “the legislation only has implications for the small cohort of serious character/national security concern detainees who enliven Australia's non-refoulement obligations.”

He said the Minister will now be required to table a statement in parliament within 15 days when they cancel the visa of a person owed protection obligations.

Grandmothers! Urgent CALL TO ACTION!

You are needed
at
The Park Prison Hotel
Sundays at 3-4pm



In recent weeks, The Park Hotel on Swanston St in Melbourne has effectively become the national prison hotel for refugees.

There have been recent transfers from interstate so that there are now 35 men detained there indefinitely.

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 inside and show them that they are not forgotten. **CALL TO ACTION>>>**

Every Sunday 3 – 4pm
Swanston St and Lincoln Sq

The Federal Government is exploring a Canada-style program of community sponsorship of humanitarian refugees. But it won't help the refugees who have been here for 8 years or more



Guardian Australia reports that the commonwealth coordinator-general for migrant services, Alison Larkins, has conducted a review of Australia's current support arrangements and submitted detailed recommendations to Alex Hawke, the Minister for immigration, citizenship, migrant services and multicultural affairs.

Speaking to an online forum convened by Welcoming Australia, the coordinator-general for migrant services is reported to have said the research from Canada

demonstrated that "governments alone can't make the difference... In Canada, you can directly see the importance of community in creating economic participation for refugees through their community sponsorship model," Larkins said.

"Seventy per cent of privately sponsored refugees in Canada declared employment earnings within their first year of arrival compared to 40% of government-assisted refugees." [Australia eyes Canada-style community sponsorship model in overhaul of refugee program | Australian immigration and asylum | The Guardian](#)

Correspondence OUT: 11 May 2021

Dear Ms Larkins

Re: Support for Canada model for community sponsorship of refugees

I was delighted to read in today's media that you have been giving in-depth consideration to the Canada-style model of community sponsorship for refugees seeking to settle in Australia.

Since late last year I have been working within my local community in regional Victoria to elevate our three years of support for a refugee family of five to one of community-sponsored permanent settlement. Because there is no such program in Australia as yet, we have been working to the Canadian model.

In effect, we now have actual experience of the many elements involved in activating a community sponsorship. This is not theoretical for us - we know that it is not for the faint-hearted. But the potential benefits for refugees AND communities are significant.

I am hoping that the program you are considering is not exclusionary – specifically, that refugees already in Australia *will be eligible* for permanent settlement under the initial version of the proposed program, regardless of their date of arrival or their means of travel to Australia. This is the Government's best opportunity to create a genuine solution to the dilemma of what to do with the cohort of people designated as illegal maritime arrivals and who, after eight years or more, still have no prospect of return to their original home country. Indefinite statelessness is not a durable solution.

My proposition for inclusion in your version of the Canadian community sponsorship model is to pilot the community sponsorship program with eligibility extended to those already recognised as refugees and already in Australia, regardless of their date or circumstances of arrival.

- ✓ This would enable the program to be piloted despite the travel restrictions imposed by the pandemic.
- ✓ The costs of bringing refugees into the country will be at zero for the purposes of the pilot.
- ✓ The qualification for refugee status will have already been tested and decided.
- ✓ The pilot program, therefore, would be focused on building the community sponsorship capability and partnership with Government which is the hallmark of the new program.
- ✓ Communities with established experience in supporting refugees will be reliable partners with government during the pilot, maximising the learnings and refining processes for mutually beneficial outcomes.
- ✓ A one-off opportunity to resolve an intractable problem in refugee policy implementation will be realised.

This would constitute, in summary, a co-design of the pilot program with key community partners. As indicated, it has the potential to resolve a chronic political problem now and lay the foundations for an orderly alternative to the current refugee policy.

As a community member of the Macedon Ranges for Rural Refugees (MRRAR) and Co-chair of Grandmothers for Refugees, I am keen to meet with you to explore this proposition further. I am able to bring others along if that is helpful to you. We are potential partners in helping you bring your work to fruition.

Thanks for taking the time to read and consider this proposition with a request to meet. I include my contact details below.

Kind regards,
Jean Ker Walsh

Dr Jean Ker Walsh
(Volunteer) Co-ordinator, The Canada Project, MRRAR
(Volunteer) Co-chair, Grandmothers for Refugees

Correspondence IN

OFFICIAL

Dear Dr Ker Walsh

Thank you for your email. I have forwarded it to David Wilden, the First Assistant Secretary of the Refugee, Humanitarian and Settlement Division, who is the right person to consider the proposal you have made to use a community sponsorship model more broadly than it is currently applied. At present the scope of my work is limited to those arriving under refugee or humanitarian visas.

I'm not sure whether you are connected yet to the Community Refugee Sponsorship Initiative, but thought you might want to be in touch with them, given your experience in providing support to the refugee family you refer to. They are currently piloting a group mentorship program for refugees who have already arrived in Australia and have had their claim to protection recognised by the Australian Government, much for the reasons you've outlined below. They are also key advocates of expanding community sponsorship approaches in Australia.

[Community Refugee Sponsorship Initiative \(ausrefugeesponsorship.com.au\)](http://ausrefugeesponsorship.com.au)

Warm regards

Alison

Alison Larkins
Commonwealth Coordinator-General for Migrant Services
Department of Home Affairs
P: (02) 6223 8390
M: 0434 606 075
E: Alison.d.larkins@homeaffairs.gov.au

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AROUND THE ELECTORATES



Cooper Grandmothers out and about making their (purple) presence obvious.



Kooyong Grandmothers (left) at their regular letter writing morning tea hosted by Gael Barrett.



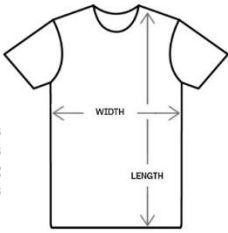
Macnamara Grans keep up the #timeforahome campaign message in their community.



NEW TEES AND TOTES AVAILABLE NOW!

Order from <https://dastshirtautomat.com/grandmothers-for-refugees> or from our G4R website.

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

Tees \$40

Totes \$25

*** 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.

Items are also available for collection at three store locations in Fitzroy, Prahran and Kensington.

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



Supporting G4R activities

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

Visit our website today www.grandmothersforrefugees.org

Events upcoming in 2021

ARAN Members' Forum
25 May, 7.30pm on Zoom

Refugee Week
20-26 June

World Refugee Day
20 June

8 years too long
19 July

20 years since Tampa
26 August

Remembering 'children overboard'
8-10 October

Remembering SIEVX
20 October

Human Rights Day
10 December

Keep watch on our website at www.grandmothersforrefugees.org and choose the Events page for details on these upcoming events.



Grandmothers for Refugees Plan for 2021-22

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.



Karen Andrews:

**YOU CAN
BRING
THESE
GIRLS
HOME TO
BILO
TODAY**

CALL TO ACTION: Let the Minister for Home Affairs Karen Andrews and Minister for Immigration Alex Hawke know that either one of them could free these little girls from Christmas Island. It only needs the stroke of a pen!

karen.andrews.mp@aph.gov.au

alex.hawke.mp@aph.gov.au

Getting active for refugees

Members are encouraged to get involved in upcoming local events and to connect with others in your federal electorate.

If you get in touch with the Executive at 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

Look for us also 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](#)

We conclude the month's news with the message we sent to the new Home Affairs Minister...and her reply.

Call it a "handball" or a case of "duck shoving"...but at least we got a reply of sorts. Will keep you posted on any reply from Minister Hawke.

With best wishes until next month,

Jean, Margaret, Jane, Linda, Gill

G4R Executive

Contact us at

info@grandmothersforrefugees.org

Correspondence OUT



info@grandmothersforrefugees.org
www.grandmothersforrefugees.org

30 April 2021

Hon. Karen Andrews MP
Minister for Home Affairs

Dear Minister

Re: Request for a meeting as a matter of urgency

The Grandmothers for Refugees welcome your appointment as the first woman to hold the significant role of Minister for Home Affairs. We are a national movement of women deeply concerned for the lives of refugees and the children, parents and individuals seeking asylum in Australia. All of these now fall within your duty of care.

After years of lobbying and numerous requests to be heard, we are formally requesting a meeting with you as a matter of urgency early in your tenure as Minister for Home Affairs.

We especially wish to raise with you the conditions of women and children who for many years have been living in Australia within a twilight zone of hopelessness and endless vulnerability. These include:

1. The refugee women and children who are living in Community under Residence Determination in Australia (community detention). We note that at 28th Feb 2021 there were 164 women and 181 children in this situation.

2. The refugee women and children living in the community on Bridging Visa E without basic rights to safe, secure housing and any safety net income provision. At 28th Feb 2021 there were 1,503 women and 1,840 children designated in this category by your department (Feb 2021 data).

We know some of these women and how they have suffered dreadful indignities in detention on the Island of Nauru. Many struggle here in Australia with the legacy of these indignities and the daily distress of being unable to achieve any future for themselves or their families.

These women have a right to a safe and welcoming home in Australia for themselves and their children as a starting point for rebuilding their lives in social and economic security.

Grandmothers for Refugees need to know what your plans are to save the lives of these women and children.

We look forward to hearing from you very soon.

Yours sincerely,

Jean Ker Walsh and Margaret Browne
Co-Chairs, Grandmothers for Refugees

cc: Prime Minister's Office

Correspondence IN

OFFICIAL

Dear Jean and Margaret,

Many thanks for your meeting request to the Minister for Home Affairs, the Hon Karen Andrews MP.

This matter falls under the administration of the Minister for Immigration, Citizenship, Migrant Services and Multicultural Affairs.

Minister Andrews is unable to meet however we encourage you to forward this request to Minister Hawke's office for consideration.

Taylor

Office of the Minister for Home Affairs

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Visit our website today www.grandmothersforrefugees.org