



NEWSLETTER May 2022

FEDERAL ELECTION 2022 EDITION



 Grandmothers say:
"Make a difference at the coming Federal election."

✓ VOTE for **BETTER**

✓ VOTE for **CHANGE**

www.grandmothersforrefugees.org

Freedom? YES!!

Change? YES!!

Better? YES!!

Dear Grandmothers and Friends

The 21 May 2022 federal election delivered the change Grandmothers for Refugees sought for our nation.

After years of seeking to engage meaningfully with successive Coalition Governments, we judged a change of federal government would be better for refugees.

What we have now is a government with a better but not ideal refugee policy. In addition, on the parliamentary crossbenches we have independent minds and voices that are demonstrably inclined towards justice for refugees.

All of those members and friends who contributed time and funds and encouragement to this campaign for change can truly celebrate.



Yet the job for refugees is not done by any means.

In this special post-election edition, we pay tribute to everyone who has contributed to the change we needed to see for refugees.

While we celebrate the freedom granted to the Biloela family, we remain very aware of the thousands of others waiting in anticipation for their own freedom days yet to come.

The new political context suggests we can look forward to our representations being more welcome, our conversations less defensive, and our letters and messaging being less pleading or combative.

Important to note is that the 'old' and new independent MPs and Senators are in WA, Qld, ACT, NSW, and Victoria.

To engage meaningfully with them, G4R needs strong voices in the communities they represent, beyond our traditional heartland of Victoria.

How do we best go about organising ourselves to respond to the new political context?

The executive has already met to prepare for the Co-ordinating Committee meeting on 15 June at which we will begin our formal post-election review. All active electorates will be asked for a report on their local activities and this grassroots feedback will be the basis of our final report back to you and to our network of refugee support groups.

We will also plan for the election of the new team to lead our movement in responding to the necessary review of our strategic purpose in light of the new political climate.

We will keep you posted.

In the meantime, here is some early post-election news along with highlights from our campaign for change.





Cruelty to refugees right to the very end

One of Scott Morrison's final acts as Prime Minister was to instruct the Australian Border Force (ABF) to publicise an interception of a suspected asylum seeker boat on election day.

As voters were going to the polls on Saturday, the Operation Sovereign Borders Commander issued a rare statement announcing a "vessel has been intercepted in a likely attempt to illegally enter Australia from Sri Lanka".

The ABC revealed that the highly controversial move during the election caretaker period followed a direct request from the Prime Minister's Office to publicly release details of the sensitive ABF operation before it had been completed.

The boat turn-back was confirmed by the incoming government which maintains support for Operation Sovereign Borders.

Photo and edited report from ABC

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After the election: which way forward for the refugee movement?

"No one held back, and No one left behind".

Dear Prime Minister Anthony Albanese

We ask that the objectives stated in Labor policy are implemented soon. Most particularly the implementation of permanent visas for those who are languishing on temporary visas. Many have reapplied as required when the original visa ran out but are still waiting for renewed visas two years later. This uncertainty limits their employment options and their children's education, and impacts their mental health. We are so heartened by your speech at the National Press Club stating unequivocally that under your government there will be "No one held back, and no one left behind". (Pamela Curr)

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THIS MONDAY 30 May, 6.30pm at the Kathleen Syme library, Faraday Street, Carlton, and on Zoom (to register go to [Zoom link here](#))

Event organised by RAC (Refugee Action Collective)

Speakers:

Hassan Jaber - Justice for Refugees and community organiser, Migrant Workers Centre

Farhad Bandesh - freed Medevac refugee

Lucy Honan - Refugee Action Collective

THE PHONE CALL THAT STOPS THE CRUELTY – FRIDAY 27 MAY 2022
DO YOU RECKON THAT WAS THE BEST PHONE CALL JIM CHALMERS MADE TODAY?



Jim Chalmers MP on Twitter

‘Speaking with the Murugappan family about my decision today as interim Home Affairs Minister to enable them to return #HometoBilo, the big-hearted QLD town which has embraced them so warmly #auspol”

twitter.com

Read about it: [Murugappan family to return to Biloela on bridging visas | Biloela family | The Guardian](#)

Celebrating family joys for one and all

Comment Jean Ker Walsh

There is joy around the nation for the Murugappan family now living the dream promised by the new Labor Government.

They are going back to Bilo. Back to freedom, albeit under bridging visa conditions and unresolved court matters. Back to the lives they knew and the open arms of the people of Biloela who fought for them and would not forget them.

The campaign to bring home Priya, Nades, Kopika and Tharnicaa was waged through the courts of law and of public opinion. Stacked against them were the tens of millions in taxpayer dollars spent by the Morrison Government on court cases and the incarceration of the Sri Lankan family on remote Christmas Island. Following evacuation to treat a life-threatening emergency, the family has been living in Western Australia on conditional visas that prevented them leaving Perth.

There is no available evidence to suggest that the treatment of the Murugappans was for any reason other than to build more political capital with far-right voters who the Liberal Party would rather vote for them than for Pauline Hanson.

This cruel way of doing politics was carried through to the dying hours of power by the Liberal Party when it sought to weaponize a small boat with presumably asylum-seeking passengers. This unseen boatload, allegedly sailed towards Australia from Sri Lanka, was framed as a real and present - even audacious - threat to the very security of our nation, on the very day of our triennial democratic voting ritual, no less!

This suspiciously convenient announcement may yet be the subject of a public integrity investigation into the use of Border Force resources by a government in caretaker mode.

Ultimately, for Nades, Priya and their girls, it was a rising tide of media interest, growing community awareness and visceral incredulity at the cruelty inflicted by the Morrison government on this little family that cut through.

Happiness for the Murugappan family is shared by refugee families, despite the knowledge that the joy of freedom is not theirs to share. Herein lies a dilemma.

Surely, the cause for joy created for one ought to be applied to all in similarly compelling circumstances. Will other refugee families now be freed too?

This is an important question coming so soon after Prime Minister Anthony Albanese said respect and kindness would characterise his government. For that to be realised, those values need to be constant in their application. A lack of constancy would raise reasonable questions about partiality for the loudest voices.

No less worthy but less visible than the Biloela family are the many refugee families silenced by fear of repercussions if they speak out. They include adults who have been not only threatened with harm causing them to flee for their lives but those who have survived the traumatising pain of inhumane torture. Their claims have been put to the test and most have been recognised as refugees.

These families include children, some who made the perilous boat journey and others who were born, like the Biloela girls, right here under the Southern Cross. They have been daily witnesses to the tragedy of their parents' inability to provide for them and give them a safe future. They remain in community detention or under the cloud of six-month visas that limit their scope to work, study and hope. They live precariously, surviving on charity and the kindness of strangers.

The traumatic stories of people fleeing for their lives should not have to be splashed across the pages of our newspapers or social media platforms in order for them to get compassionate and just treatment from our national government.

This is not an argument against freeing the Biloela family. Quite the opposite. It is the right thing to do. This is about making sure it is for the right reason. If so, others will be freed too.

There are Australian communities well practised in welcoming and supporting refugee families. Like the people of Biloela, these communities are ready to welcome refugees as permanent residents and neighbours who, like the rest of us, are looking for the better future we have been promised.



GREEN LIGHT FOR 'GO' IN CHISHOLM

Below left: Kooyong's Marysia Green and Linda King (below right) from Cooper were among those handing out scorecards and the G4R Vote for Better Vote for Change cards at pre-poll and polling booths.

Bottom: Kerry Nicholls (Deakin) and Catherine Bearsley (Chisholm) both stepped into Acting Co-ordinator roles during the six-week campaign.



G4R KOOYONG CELEBRATES WITH THEIR FLYING SQUAD SUPPORTERS



Above: Allison Tulloch and Davina Lippman (Kooyong Co-ordinator) with Fran McCabe (Cooper)



Kooyong members celebrate with their sisters from the **Flying Squad** who responded to calls from the marginal and targeted seats to boost the visibility of Grandmothers at vigils and to letterbox in strategically identified booth areas.

CALL OUT to ADELAIDE VIGIL



We must end Indefinite Detention
And Settle the Refugees

2pm Sun 17th July

Leave from Tarntanyangga / Victoria Sq for
Walk to the Vietnamese Boat People Monument
(next to the River at the end of Kintore Ave)

With speakers at walk finish - including those detained
<speakers TBA>

Organised by Adelaide Vigil for Manus and Nauru – adelaidevigil@gmail.com

WESTERN AUSTRALIA G4R RECRUITING NOW!

Moves are underway to formally establish G4R groups in WA starting with metro Perth.

Marita Keenan is keen to hear from anyone already connected or interested in building a G4R presence in WA communities.



Indicate your interest by emailing the G4R info email info@grandmothersforrefugees.org with "Perth" in the subject line.

Marita recently returned to Perth from visiting her family in Melbourne where she took the opportunity to meet with G4R Exec member Jane Touzeau and learn more about how we organise and lobby on behalf of refugees.

JOIN US

Grandmothers for Refugees welcomes all those who share our purpose. Those interested may join as a Grandmother or as a Friend of Grandmothers, affectionately known as Frogs.

Go to our website page [JOIN US — GRANDMOTHERS FOR REFUGEES](#)

Did you see this from Richard Flanagan?

Always an advocate for refugees, in this opinion piece in the Nine newspapers, Flanagan makes case that the seeds of the Coalition defeat were sewn decades ago by John Howard:

"It was Howard, after all, who from 1996 on campaigned internationally against binding global carbon emission reduction targets. His reasoning for doing so, he told cabinet in 1997, was that Australia was "a major exporter of energy". His advocacy to key world leaders, cabinet papers reveal, proved "influential". And so, we led the world backwards.

"He similarly turned back a historic tide of national progress on everything from the republic to reconciliation, refused to even use the word multiculturalism in his early years of prime ministership, and set the dogs of xenophobia onto Australian politics, transforming refugees into a threatening invasion force." **Read the article in full here:** <https://www.smh.com.au/national/morrison-government-s-fall-marks-end-of-howard-era-ascendancy-20220525-p5aod6.html?fbclid=IwAR0sgCr - mF0LfCOYi-Jf-I6JVJ2ZM8jBXuExitXfLX4KDp-KYGZIZdGBo>

And FINALLY...

Again, WELL DONE, Grandmothers and Frogs, for making sure refugees were remembered in shaping our shared vision for change. Let's keep going. *Jean, Margaret, Jane, Linda*