



Sunday, 7 April 2019

Hello Grandmothers and Friends,

Since our last newsletter, the new GADRC executive roles have been confirmed by the Planning Committee and we can formally share those with you now.

Jean Ker Walsh – GADRC Chair (at right)

Margaret Browne – Deputy Chair

Clare Forbes – Executive Member

Mary Williams – Executive Member

We all look forward to the challenges ahead which include a federal election campaign and a stock-take of our purpose after five years and in a context of inevitable change. We especially thank the outgoing executive members who have generously guided the 'newbies' through an extended handover period. We pay tribute to their dedicated work which, in so many respects, is a hard act to follow. There will be more to say about that in the coming months.



We cannot forget

The tragedy of what happened within the Christchurch community is largely out of the media now, yet the impact of that hateful act is not lost or forgotten. Each victim killed or injured was someone's child, someone's grandchild. Perhaps not all, but some were surely refugees. I am especially aware, as a 'grandmother here' to three kids in community detention, how badly their grandparents in Iran miss them and despair at the distance between them. After the first shock of the killings, I was thinking of those distant grandparents and relatives. How would they ever deal with this ultimate loss in faraway New Zealand, on top of the loss they have been living through every day since their children and grandchildren had to flee for their lives

and away from their loving arms? For all the grandmothers deprived of the nearness of their grandchildren, let's press on with our efforts while being truly grateful for every school pick-up, every sleep-over, every messy game and every opportunity to feel the love. *Jean*

Election 2019

Within days we will know the date when democratic judgment can be passed on the performance of those who have shamed us with their cruelty to refugee children, their families and the thousands who have sought safe refuge, as is their right.

Your planning committee and executive have been working on an election strategy that sets an overall theme for what we will do over coming weeks. You grandmothers and FROGS will no doubt create the local detail, making your own plans to bring the message home in your electorate. There is a core message we need to get to every candidate who has an eye on a seat in the next Parliament, and it is this:

While the child refugees are off Nauru at last (March 2019), there are still more than 200 children in detention centres or held in community detention in Australia.



While our primary concern as grandmothers is focused on children, we are mindful also of almost 1000 other refugees and asylum seekers in indefinite offshore detention. Some of these refugees were children when they arrived over 5 years ago. Some are parents separated from their children. All are someone's children and grandchildren.

As elders in our community, we care for current and future generations. For *their* future, legislated safeguards are essential to prevent a repeat of the current inhumane treatment of refugees seeking safe refuge in Australia. Accordingly:

We, the **Grandmothers Against Detention of Refugee Children**, make

Four Demands on the 46th Parliament

1. End all forms of detention for refugee children

- ❖ A child is an innocent, incapable of the full reasoning that warrants accountability before the law or consequent punishment.
- ❖ Detention is punishment. Indefinite detention is experienced as torture.
- ❖ Whether it is detention behind bars or barbed wire on a remote island or on mainland Australia, or community detention where all aspects of life are governed and personal freedom is denied, detention limits the developmental opportunities for children to grow and flourish.

2. End refugee family separation

- ❖ It is against the basic human rights of any child to be separated from parents or family within a regime of politically-motivated detention.
- ❖ Wherever possible, children should be cared for in community settings with primary caregivers. For all children, attachment is central to well-being and recovery from trauma.
- ❖ The family values upheld by political leaders for themselves and the Australian community are devalued by the hypocrisy of politically mandated separation of refugee family members.

3. Get all refugees off Manus and Nauru to safe settlement

- ❖ The irrefutable evidence is that indefinite detention on Manus and Nauru is unsafe and is the cause of death, psychological trauma and physical harm.
- ❖ Safe settlement and a secure future are essential for all refugee children, particularly those with lived experience of extended detention on Nauru.
- ❖ After more than five years - and still with no prospect of an orderly and timely alternative to indefinite detention - the regional processing purpose of Manus and Nauru is a demonstrable failure. The urgent remedy is immediate safe settlement, in Australia if necessary.

4. Ensure refugee children and their families seeking asylum are held no longer than 72 hours to enable basic identity and health checks.

- ❖ Children and their families warrant priority attention in the processing of claims for asylum and safe refuge.
- ❖ The practice of detaining children should only occur for the shortest possible time and with decisions informed by the best interests of the child - not the political interest of any government.
- ❖ 72 hours is a reasonable period for assessment of any immediate health risk and, if necessary, transfer for treatment in a community setting.

These demands are based on what any person in fear for their lives and those of their children would expect from their fellow human beings.

In practical terms, we understand that there are legislative and administrative measures to work through to turn around the cruel policies and treatment of past governments. Nevertheless, we are impatient on behalf of the children and their refugee families to see the need for change acknowledged and met as a priority of the 46th Parliament.

The Grandmothers are keen to work with incoming Parliamentarians - be they in Government, on the cross benches, or on the Opposition side – to ensure the 46th Parliament begins well and progresses to establish a record that should make every MP and Senator and citizen proud, rather than ashamed of what has been done in our name.

New Campaign Flyers

We are currently working on a campaign flyer featuring these Grandmothers' Four Demands. We will send it in electronic format to all electorate coordinators in the coming week. In the meantime, for your use, current flyers are attached.

Share your plans and campaign actions with all of us

We want to know what is happening in electorates to ensure refugee children and families are not forgotten during the election campaign. Send your news and photos to grandmothersref@gmail.org after each event, rally, activity. We will add it to our website www.grandmothersadrc.org news page.

Be seen and heard at the Melbourne Palm Sunday **Walk for Justice for Refugees 14th April**

We are calling out all Grandmothers and Friends of Grandmothers to **be a big purple presence** in Melbourne's CBD starting from outside the State Library, corner Latrobe Street and Swanston Streets at 2pm.

On the Sunday in Melbourne, we will gather **between 1.30 and 1.45 pm** on the State Library steps, at the bottom near the front. This will make us clearly visible and also allow us to hear the speakers. Please wear lots of purple, bring your friends and family and come ready to hear **Behrouz Boochani, Richard Flanagan, and David Manne** speak. Then walk with us from the State Library down Swanston St to the Domain Gardens. Those who can't quite manage the walk, please come to the State Library steps and help make our message loud and clear. "**End the cruelty to refugees**".

Call out interstate family and friends to 14 April rallies in their capital cities

- **Sydney:** 2-4pm. **Say Yes to Refugees**
Belmore Park, 191 Hay St, Haymarket, NSW.
- **Adelaide:** 2pm. **I CHOOSE HUMANE.**
Victoria Square, Adelaide
- **Brisbane:** 2-4pm. **Palm Sunday Rally for Peace and Refugees**
Speakers Corner, outside Parliament House, Corner of George and Alice Streets, Brisbane.
- **Canberra:** 1pm. **Enough is Enough: Palm Sunday 2019 Rally for Refugees**
Garema Place, Canberra
- **Hobart:** 2-4pm. **Refugee Rights on Palm Sunday**
Parliament Lawns, Hobart
- **Perth:** 1-3pm. **Palm Sunday Walk for Justice for Refugees 2019**
St George's Cathedral

More on Refugee Policies

In the previous edition of the Campaign Newsletter we summarised the Liberal and Labor refugee policies. In this edition we aimed to cover the Greens and the Nationals policies.

The greens have a plan to:

- End offshore detention on Manus Island and Nauru
- Increase Australia's humanitarian intake to 50,000 per year
- Establish a regional solution for people seeking asylum including assessing people's claims for protection in partner countries in a timely way

- Introduce a 7-day limit for onshore detention and provide fair support for people seeking asylum to live with dignity in the community
- Abolish Temporary Protection Visas and reintroduce Permanent Protection Visas for refugees. (Read the Greens' full policy document [here](#).)

The Nationals

There is no refugee or immigration policy available on the Nationals website. (Check it out [here](#).)

Checking on the children

Our latest and most reliable information is that:

5 children are in locked detention

287 children in community detention

2453 refugee children in community on Bridging Visas

An open and shut case

In February, PM Scott Morrison announced the detention centre on Christmas Island would reopen at a cost to taxpayers of \$1.4bn in response to passage of legislation allowing for the medical evacuation of ill refugees from Manus and Nauru. He doubled down on his announcement with a whirlwind visit to the Island's high security facility with warnings of dangerous detainees.

The ABC [reports](#) that Tuesday's budget papers reveal the Government plan is to close the Christmas Island Immigration Detention Centre by July 1 and return it to "contingency setting".

Watch for the next GADRC Campaign Newsletter issued direct to your email inbox.