



Protesters demanding permanent visas for refugees rally outside Parliament House in Canberra on Monday. Source: AAP / Lukas Coch

Dear Grandmothers and Friends

It is a month since the Federal Government announced the beginning of its process to enable around 19,000 refugees and asylum seekers to settle permanently in Australia.

Since then, we are hearing of individuals who have received their Resolution of Status (RoS) Visa. So, they are now permanent residents with certainty about their future. They can stay. They can rebuild their lives. They can look forward to seeing the families they left behind when they fled looking for safety.

We celebrate with them. But there is a bitterness to the celebrations. There are between 9,000 and 12,000 others whose uncertainty and hopelessness continues. They say the process is unfair. On March 6,

more than a thousand of those left behind took their grievance to Canberra.

Iranian asylum seeker Ebrahim Asadolahzadeh told [SBS News](#) he arrived in Australia in 2013 and has not seen his mother, son, or wife, for a decade.

“Labor promised us ‘we are the good guys, when we come to power, we will help you.’ I even handed out pamphlets for them at the last election,” he said.

“[For] 10 years I haven’t seen my son, my mother ... I keep telling them next year, next year. Enough is enough, I cannot handle more of this.”

The long, tragic story of Australia’s treatment of people seeking asylum is not finished.



Evacuation to Safety Bill defeated by Labor and Liberal Senators

Grandmothers for Refugees are extremely disappointed by the defeat of the Migration Amendment (Evacuation to Safety) Bill 2023 proposed by Senator Nick McKim.

The Bill's purpose was to evacuate people held in offshore processing to safety while they wait for a durable solution.

Grandmothers for Refugees supported the Bill because it proposed a workable way forward consistent with Labor party policy settings. It would have ensured evacuees have access to quality medical and mental health services after nearly 10 years trapped indefinitely in inhumane conditions, separated from family, and without hope for the future.

GFR's was one of 148 supportive submissions made to the Senate Committee Inquiry into the legislation. Only one submission – from the Department of Home Affairs, Clare O'Neil's department - was not supportive.

The Committee recommended **not passing** the Evacuation to Safety Bill in spite of acknowledging that *“a number of asylum seekers and refugees have been in offshore detention far longer than can reasonably be expected. The committee recognises that this has resulted in significant personal costs, including physical and mental health costs, that cannot be allowed to continue.”*

The Committee recommendation went on to urge the government to *“urgently consider all available options to effect the removal of asylum seekers and refugees currently in offshore detention”*.

Labor Senators Green, Ciccone and Polley along with Liberal Senators Scarr and Antic voted to defeat the Bill while the Greens and Independent Senators Thorpe and Pocock voted to pass it.

Thanks to Ro Roberts and Barb Trauer from Cooper GFR for their valuable contribution to writing the submission.

– Janet Joss



“In 2019, when in Opposition, the Labor Party supported the Medevac amendment moved by the Australian Greens, which was a massive step forward for many people in offshore detention. It now seems that the Labor Party in government is choosing not to work in the same spirit of cooperation to finish the job.” Senator Nick McKimm

To join this Refugee Legal Briefing on Tuesday 28 March at 1pm, the link is [here](https://us02web.zoom.us/j/82421386412?pwd=T1Z1NXNCUG54V2JhOVVEckkyMWdGUT09)
<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/82421386412?pwd=T1Z1NXNCUG54V2JhOVVEckkyMWdGUT09>

INVITATION



Grandmothers for Refugees invites you to this online briefing with **DAVID MANNE** Executive Director & Principal Solicitor at Refugee Legal.

G4R Briefing Tuesday 28 March 1.00pm AEDT >>>

Understand the process for over 19,000 refugees to permanently settle in Australia.

How does it work?

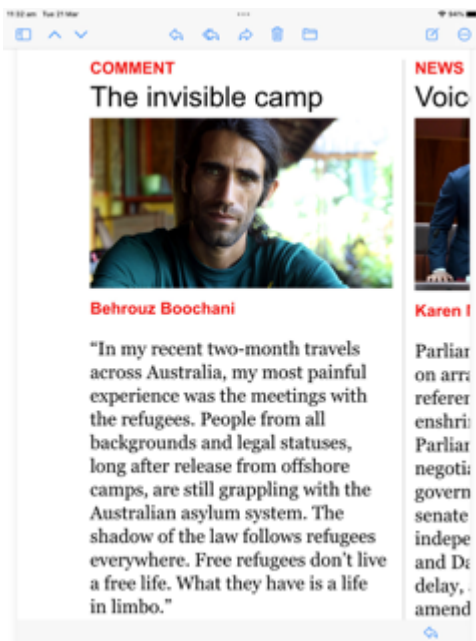
Who can help?

How long will it take?

What about the more than 9,000 left behind?



Did you see this? Behrouz Boochani in *The Saturday Paper* March 11-17



...On my last day in Australia, the government finally decided to grant permanent residency to 19,000 asylum seekers who live on the Australian mainland. While this is a welcome change, more than 12,000 refugees, including Shahed, were not included.

This is another feature of **the Australian immigration system. It has turned randomness into a principle**, thereby intensifying the sense of life in limbo for refugees. Every new policy that is announced excludes thousands of eligible people, who don't understand why. That was the case from the very beginning, when they were taking people from boats to camps. **Even the people who came to Australia on the same boat had different fates.** Some ended up offshore and some were taken to the mainland, and no one ever clarified the criteria for those decisions.

Mysteriously, the situation of the refugees who came to the mainland from the offshore camps is more complicated than that of people who applied for asylum from the mainland. They don't even know whether they get to stay in Australia, or whether they will instead be transferred to another country, such as the United States or Canada or New Zealand.

If that happens to Shahed, he will have to wait a few more years in a different country to see his family. The child he left behind in Iran is now 10 years old. Who knows how old his son will be when this nightmare is over?

Read this article in full [here](#). [Living in Australia's invisible prison | The Saturday Paper](#)

Justice for Refugees



**PALM SUNDAY RALLIES AROUND THE NATION
2ND APRIL 2023**

PLAN TO JOIN A RALLY HAPPENING NEAR YOU

For up-to-date information on rallying points near you, check the ARAN (Australian Refugee Action Network) website >>>

[Palm Sunday 2023 | Australian Refugee Action Network ARAN](https://www.aran.org.au/)

Listing of Palm Sunday Events (as posted 21 March 2023)

VICTORIA

- **Melbourne – Walk for Justice and Freedom for Refugees**
Sunday 2 April **1.30pm – 4.00pm** State Library Swanston Street
[Refugee Advocacy Network Victoria](#)
Find out more on **Facebook Events**.
- **Bendigo – Put your Hands Up for Refugees**
Sunday 2 April **12.30pm – 2.00pm** Bendigo Library Gardens
Palm Sunday gathering and picnic
Organised by Bendigo Churches and Bendigo RAR
- **Wonthaggi – Palm Sunday Walk – Justice for Refugees**
Sunday 2 April **2.00pm**
Meet under the Wonthaggi Mine Whistle, Apex park
For further details contact: Felicia Di Stefano via [email](#)

ACT

- **Canberra**
Sunday 2 April **1.00pm** Garema Place, Civic
Contingents to gather at Petrie Plaza (the merry-go-round) at 12.30pm
More details TBA

NSW

- **Sydney – Palm Sunday Rally – Permanent visas for refugees, Call for peace**
Sunday 2 April **2.00pm** Belmore Park, near Central Station
Find out more on **Facebook Events**.
- **Newcastle – Palm Sunday Picnic for Peace**
Sunday 2nd April **1pm** at Civic Park (cnr King and Auckland St)

WESTERN AUSTRALIA

- **Perth- Peace and Justice for Refugees**
Sunday April 2 1.00 p.m. - St Georges Cathedral in the city
Find out more on the facebook event page here: <https://fb.me/e/428P7U0yG>.

QUEENSLAND

- **Brisbane**
Sunday 2 April **2.00pm** King George Square
More details TBA

TASMANIA

- **Hobart – Postcards to Parliament**
Saturday 1 April **11.00am – 1.00pm** on Parliament lawns, Hobart
Tasmanian Refugee Rights Action Group FB page [is here](#)

Palm Sunday is the day to stand together and demand “Justice for Refugees”



WHAT WE SAY >>>

The Palm Sunday demand for Justice for Refugees means...

- Permanent visas and family reunion for all refugees
- Fair and timely assessment of all claims for refugee status
- Health care, work rights, income support, and access to education for all those seeking asylum
- Releasing ALL refugees from detention
- Offering resettlement here for refugees still in PNG and on Nauru, and those in trapped in Indonesia
- Ending offshore processing and detention
- Increasing the humanitarian intake of refugees

BACKGROUND TO OUR DEMANDS >>>

ALL refugees need permanent visas and access to family reunion

We welcome the news, that 19,000 refugees who have been in limbo for 10 years on temporary TPVs and SHEV visas will now be able to apply for permanent visas, and will also be able to apply for family reunion. Refugees have been separated from loved ones for many years, and family reunification is an essential element of the resettlement process.

People seeking recognition as refugees need fair and timely assessment process

Around 12,000 people have had their refugee claims processed under the flawed so-called 'Fast Track System'. After 10 years most of these people are still waiting for their claims for refugee status to be determined, and many have been unfairly refused. The announcement by the government on 13 February has no effect for these people.

People who are seeking recognition as refugees need work rights and support in the community

People on bridging visas have no income safety net. Because of their short-term visas, it is difficult for them to find permanent work. Some have no work or study rights at all. Some people do not have access to www.grandmothersforrefugees.org

Medicare. Many people on bridging visas are struggling in poverty while living in substandard and insecure housing. All people who are seeking asylum need support and opportunities to live with dignity, and not be at risk of destitution while they wait for their refugee claims to be assessed.

No refugee or person seeking asylum should be held in indefinite detention

The Albanese Government has released a number of people from long-term detention. However, there are still people seeking protection who remain in immigration detention, some of whom face deportation.

Refugees and people seeking asylum still in limbo on PNG, Nauru, and Indonesia

At least 150 people are still held in shocking conditions on Nauru and in PNG. There are around 1,000 refugees previously held offshore, including the families brought here from Nauru in 2015. Around 14,000 refugees and people seeking asylum from Afghanistan, Myanmar and Sri Lanka have been stranded in Indonesia since 2014. These people cannot be resettled in Indonesia and cannot return to their home countries. All need the option of resettlement in Australia.

The Australian government needs to significantly increase the quota for resettling refugees

In recent years the quota of 13,750 has not been filled. The Albanese government has committed to increase the number of refugees to be resettled, but so far there has been no increase. Thousands of refugees are desperately waiting for Australia to lift its humanitarian intake to at least 30,000 per year. Importantly, all of the places in the refugee quota need to be allocated each year.

Refugees still want to see us and hear us



Following the refugee protests in Canberra earlier this month, some refugees expressed disappointment in the small numbers of “Anglo faces” in the crowd. They wanted to know if we had abandoned them.

I’ve been one of those encouraged by the greater number of refugees who, since the change of government, have been prepared to organise and raise their voices. Stepping back to give them space to speak for themselves seemed the right thing to do.

But stepping back to make space has sent an unintended message. I see Palm Sunday as the ideal opportunity to find the balance - to stand together, to raise our voices together, to reaffirm that we seek justice together.

Please join a Palm Sunday 2023 rally to show that you are *still* for and with refugees.

— Jean Ker Walsh



Grandmothers for Refugees is proposing to petition the Federal Parliament during Refugee Week in mid-June.

Our draft petition seeks an extension to the recently announced process for granting permanent protection to **INCLUDE ALL** so-called **Unauthorised Maritime Arrivals, Legacy Caseload, Transitory Persons, and those still in PNG and on Nauru.**

The campaign for signatures to our Petition aims to involve every G4R electorate group.

Our aim is to collect signatures through April and May with a baseline target of 100 petitioners at least from each electorate.

Then we would like each electorate group to present a copy of their petition to their local MP, getting as much local publicity as possible.

The aggregated original petition sheets will then be formally lodged on World Refugee Day.

There are strict rules on framing a petition to Parliament. We are almost ready to go.

More information will come through your electorate co-ordinator and on our website.

UPCOMING EVENT - A MUSICAL FEAST for WA MEMBERS - THIS SUNDAY

CARAD (Centre for Asylum Seekers, Refugees and Detainees Inc) provides emergency and financial relief for people seeking asylum who have been denied government supports or the right to work.

www.carad.org.au



Concert for CARAD

SUNDAY March 26th AT 2:00 PM

WESLEY UNITING CHURCH crn. William & Hay Streets, Perth.

JIMJAM - versatile, multi-instrumental vocal harmony trio.

GRAND HANDZ PIANO DUO - four hands, one piano.

BERNARD CARNEY, OAM – singer, songwriter, choir director

WA CLASSICAL GUITAR ORCHESTRA

Plus: short PowerPoint presentation of detainee and artist Naser Moradi's artwork

Tickets \$40 Book at <https://www.trybooking.com/CEKVD>

Jointly presented by: Western Suburbs Do Gooders & Grandmothers for Refugees



FREE+EQUAL



Free & Equal

Position paper: A Human Rights Act for Australia



Human Rights should apply to refugees – and what about us?

The Australian Human Rights Commission has developed a model for what a national Human Rights Act might look like, how it could function, and what it would do.

See it here>>> A [Human Rights Act](https://www.humanrights.gov.au/our-work/free-equal/hra-2022-main-report-rgb-0-0.pdf) for Australia [free equal hra 2022 - main report rgb 0 0.pdf](https://www.humanrights.gov.au/our-work/free-equal/hra-2022-main-report-rgb-0-0.pdf) ([humanrights.gov.au](https://www.humanrights.gov.au))

From the Australian Human Rights Commission 9 March 2023

Recent correspondence bringing back memories of the Cavalcade to Canberra

Sent: Tuesday, March 7, 2023 11:30 AM

To: 'Jean Ker Walsh'

Subject: Vale Amy Duncan

Dear Jean

I'm not aware if there is a Hotham group of Grandmothers for Refugees, so I'm writing to you as there may be some members of Grandmothers more widely who knew **Amy Duncan**.

Amy was passionate about many causes and among other things, she was a **founding member of Labor for Refugees** in 2001.



As a member of the Grandmothers Against Detention of Refugee Children she was one of 209 who travelled to Canberra in March 2016.

She told me that one of the highlights of their visit to Parliament House was when they stopped in the foyer and sang *We Shall Overcome*, until security asked them to move.

The photo is of Amy boarding the bus to Canberra for that very trip.

Amy was 89 and had been in a nursing home for some months. Having fled South Africa due to apartheid, she came to Australia via the UK and raised her family in Springvale.

Clare O'Neill in paying tribute to her on Instagram yesterday said: "One of the things I loved most deeply about Amy was just that – her willingness to fight for her beliefs. She was a warm, loving, beautiful human being – a midwife, in her

working life. But when she saw something against her values, she was utterly ferocious – a force to be reckoned with."

Pauline Brown

President

Labor for Refugees Victoria

Thanks to Pauline for ensuring we have this news so we can celebrate Amy and all who made our Canberra advocacy for refugees so memorable.

And finally...

Jean has recently advised the Executive that she will be stepping down from her role as Co-chair at the end of May. "I have stayed a year longer than planned, really.

"For many years here in the Macedon Ranges, I have been an active member of my local Rural Australians for Refugees group. Last year I was elected Chair. We are dynamic and growing with three township groups now. We also have several activity groups managing major events, grocery collections, hosting refugees, and awareness-raising across our region.

"G4R Exec is strong and working well together. I feel the time is right to focus my efforts locally, knowing our national movement is full of talented women capable of taking our advocacy commitments forward."

We will say our farewells to Jean in May. In the meantime, we look forward to seeing you at the online briefing with David Manne on Tuesday.

Margaret, Jean, Marita, Janet, Virginia and Gael