



NEWSLETTER May 2020

www.grandmothersforrefugees.org

We hope this finds all Grandmothers and Frogs safe and well in these months of coronavirus and restricted movement.

Isolation may have cramped our style but not our commitment to refugees.

Many groups are meeting via Zoom – happy to see each other’s faces, sharing friendships and news. Individuals are writing letters to editors and emailing MPs.

You can find more news on our website [here](http://www.grandmothersforrefugees.org) or type in to search www.grandmothersforrefugees.org.



Sunday June 14 to Saturday June 20, 2020

Celebrating the Year of Welcome



World Refugee Day
20 June

In the lead-in to World Refugee Day 20th June, you will find plenty in this newsletter that means everyone can get involved over coming weeks from the safety of your own home.



Protesters on the roof of Mantra call time on refugee detention

While Grandmothers for Refugees has not endorsed protests that break laws and Covid-19 restrictions, we know refugee rights to ask for asylum and our duties as citizens go hand-in-hand.



Covid-19 and Health risks to refugees

Recent cluster outbreaks of COVID-19 among migrant workers living in dormitory conditions in Singapore confirm that there is a real and present risk for people forced to live in close conditions. Refugees in detention are unable to practise physical distancing, self-isolation and hygiene which are critical safeguards against contracting COVID-19.

Visit our website today www.grandmothersforrefugees.org

CALL TO ACTION

Australian born Tharunicaa turns three on 12th June. This will be her third birthday in detention.

- Please send her a birthday card
- Ask the children in your life to make and send a card
- Post the cards between 1st and 6th June

Address your cards to:

Tharunicaa on Christmas Island
c/- The Acting Minister for Immigration
The Hon Alan Tudge MP
Suite 4, Level 1, 420 Burwood Highway
Wantirna South VIC 3152

Before posting:

Take a photo of yourself or a small group of you posting the card(s).

- Post your photo on your social media
- Send it to info@grandmothersforrefugees.com. We will post it on our website
- Send a group photo by text message to Linda 0418 105 900 and ask her to post it on the Grandmothers twitter feed.



Want to remind Minister Tudge that he has the power to let this family return to Biloela? Maybe a small reminder note on the back of the envelope?

“Dear friend, you may feel alone but we want you to know that we are thinking about you and fighting to be able to welcome you to Australia.”

- Anonymous, QLD

Unlikely pen pals

What Australian kids wrote to children on Nauru

At last the Unicef blog built around the letters Oz children sent to the refugee children on Nauru is out for global attention. You can visit it here: <https://www.unicef.org.au/blog/news-and-insights/january-2020/unlikely-pen-pals>

Resettlement to US continues despite Covid-19

We have news (19/5) that 40 people from PNG and possibly MITA (Melbourne Immigration Transit Accommodation) have been flown to the US under the refugee swap deal.

This follows an earlier BuzzFeed report:

The ongoing operation of the resettlement program in the US leaves refugees in Australia and its offshore detention camps who have been accepted under the program with an invidious choice: to stay in detention, where many have been for the past seven years, or start a new life in the US as it is ravaged by a deadly pandemic.

For Sali, a Sudanese refugee who landed in Maryland on Wednesday after a journey lasting more than 24 hours, the choice was easy.

“Of course, there is the coronavirus, but what can I do? If you die inside, is that better? It’s better to die outside. You’re free,” he told BuzzFeed News by telephone from the house where he will be in quarantine alone for the next fortnight.



Ads-Up - [Australian Diaspora Steps Up](#) is a volunteer organisation of Australian expats working in America (now extended to Canada too). Like us, these Australians are all concerned at the unfair treatment of our refugees and offer local support and friendship. They welcome donations.

June General Meeting **CANCELLED**

The Grandmothers for Refugees General Meeting scheduled for June has had to be cancelled due to Covid-19 restrictions.

Members will be advised of a new date later in the year, eased Covid-19 restrictions permitting.

MANUS – An Oscar qualifying documentary short film by Angus McDonald

MANUS is a 13-minute documentary that shines a light on the plight hundreds of refugees & asylum seekers held captive offshore by the Australian Federal Government for over 6 years on Manus Island in Papua New Guinea. Hear the stories of the men on Manus in their own words from secretly captured footage.

You can **watch the film** here

<https://howlingeagle.com/manusmedia>

As I learn to live in freedom, Australia is still tormenting refugees



As I learn to live in freedom, Australia is still tormenting refugees
I have received messages from friends regarding Australians being confined to their homes and how they might begin to understand ...

[smh.com.au](https://www.smh.com.au)

Opinion by Behrouz Bouchani

SMH and *The Age* 17 May 2020

It has been more than five months since I began living in New Zealand. After the first month – during which I was traveling to participate in panels and events – I spent my time trying to comprehend freedom.

For someone who has been immersed in a tragedy and humanitarian crisis for years, living in a quiet and calm city like Christchurch represents a profound transformation. I have been able to contemplate my life on Manus. Not a day has passed that I have not thought about the refugees in Port Moresby, Nauru or Australia.

My experience on Manus is like an ongoing nightmare... read [more](#) here

Visit our website today www.grandmothersforrefugees.org



CALL TO ACTION - PREPARING FOR REFUGEE WEEK

In the weeks leading up to Refugee Week 15-20 June, Grandmothers and Frogs are asked to make a special effort with social media posts, letter writing and messages to local MPs, Senators, and local media. (Addresses are on the Resources page of our website – type in www.grandmothersforrefugees.org)

The refugee support network has agreed we should use these hashtags:

#justice4refugees #GameOver #NobodyLeftBehind

Suggested weekly themes for online messages and letters to local MPs, Senators and media:

Week 1. 18 - 24 May	Refugee stories of successful resettlement, including Biloela family
Week 2. 25 - 30 May	Income issues - include refugees on bridging visas - #NobodyLeftBehind
Week 3. 1 - 7 June	Detention is unfair and cruel - #justice4refugees
Week 4. 8 – 14 June	Remembering those on PNG and Nauru - #GameOver

Refugee Week. 15-20 June – go to www.grandmothersforrefugees.org for latest on events
World Refugee Week. 20 June - Online Forum 1-2.30pm

Actions for refugees go on despite the Covid-19 restrictions

During these 8-9 weeks of the pandemic, our grassroots campaign activities have been redesigned to what we can do 'from the kitchen table'.

- ✓ Many Grandmothers have been successful in having letters to the editor published in their local newspapers.
- ✓ There have been increased postings on Twitter and Facebook, sharing news and concerns.
- ✓ The virtual Palm Sunday event was well supported by Grandmothers making their message signs and sending in their pics for posting on twitter and at www.grandmothersforrefugees.org . Check them out on the Gallery page.
- ✓ Executive meetings have been held via Zoom. This month's Planning Committee was held via Zoom on May 19.
- ✓ The new website has been regularly updated with breaking news, pics and information.
- ✓ The Executive has twice written formally to the Chief Medical Officer, Prof Murphy, asking him to investigate the risk of cluster outbreaks of Covid-19 in detention centres including the motel/hotels Mantra (Melbourne) and Kangaroo Point (Brisbane).
- ✓ Formal letters have also been sent to Premier Daniel Andrews and Minister Martin Foley alerting them to the physical and mental health risks to detainees held in Victoria.
- ✓ Grandmothers have attended online forums with other refugee support groups.
- ✓ Local groups have kept in touch and a few have managed to meet regularly via Zoom.

We hope you will find something here and on our website to inspire you to stay active and committed to refugees, children and families seeking asylum.

Warm wishes from the Executive and Planning Committee