



NEWSLETTER June 2022

COMPASSIONATE POLITICS – under renewal



Image: SBS news

Dear Grandmothers and Friends

This is some of the change we wanted to see. It appears that we now have a Prime Minister who can embrace the vulnerable and give hope to the hopeless.

It feels safe to declare that compassion IS possible in politics. And that has to be good for not just the Nadesalinghams (their preferred family name) - now returned to Biloela - but for all of us.

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- Congratulations Sr Brigid Arthur AO



Betty McGeever, former Fremantle Librarian.



Picture: Fremantle Herald Interactive

Grandmothers in Perth are being urged to stand up and join a branch of Grandmothers for Refugees which lobbies for compassionate government policies for people seeking asylum.

Grandmothers for Refugees (G4R) was first established in 2014 in Victoria and now has a membership of 2000 people Australia wide. There is no branch in WA however, although there are individual members of the grassroots movement in the state. One does not necessarily have to be a grandmother to join - friends are welcome and are affectionately called FRoGS (Friends of Grandmothers).

Membership to Grandmothers for Refugees is free. Its main activities are to write letters and meet with politicians and influencers, speak at community events, and distribute information to raise awareness of refugee matters. For further news and background detail on G4R activities, go to www.grandmothersforrefugees.org

It is proposed to hold a **Perth meeting in early July**. If you would like to find out more about the Perth group and meet with like-minded people, you are invited to email info@grandmothersforrefugees.org placing **PERTH** in the **subject line**.

During the run-up to the Federal election, members of Grandmothers for Refugees over east, handed out information leaflets at train stations, gathered in shopping centers and pre-polling locations with banners and placards urging a welcoming approach to asylum seekers. The Grandmothers also actively supported the *Game Over* campaign led by human rights activist Craig Foster and the *Let Them Stay* movement for the Biloela family.

Currently the immediate focus of the Grandmothers for Refugees is to advocate for the immediate release from detention of people seeking asylum; stop mandatory detention both onshore and offshore and to end all forms of temporary protection visas to enable asylum seekers to apply for permanent protection.

Interested? Please contact: Marita via email to info@grandmothersforrefugees.org and put PERTH in the subject line.

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G4R 2022 ELECTION STRATEGY REVIEW

Following the Federal Election, active electorate groups (Victoria) each prepared a local report. These reports were the basis for a summary document prepared by Co-chair Margaret Browne for discussion at the June meeting of the Co-ordination Committee. The finalised report is provided as important information for all members. It is followed by a call for nominations for the new Executive.

Overall view

Mary Williams: 'Looking back over the campaign there's no doubt that our fledgling group, and the whole G4R movement, benefitted immensely by the early Strategy Planning, the clarity of its campaign focus and messaging.'

Meg L'Estrange: 'Overall the Grandmothers for Refugees should congratulate themselves on a well-managed and very visible campaign. We undoubtedly contributed to the groundswell of desire for change.'

So, what worked?

Messaging

Strong messaging around 'Vote for Better, Vote for Change' gave us a clear focus. Getting our message out early before the noise of the impending election was described by Mary as 'inspired'. Well-designed corflutes, flyers and report cards/election cards both increased our visibility and provided voters with food for thought. Thank you Jean. This was supported by corflutes developed by Cooper (in conjunction with the exec) around themes such as "Compassion not Punishment". Thanks, Janet Joss, for initiating those.

Targetting marginal electorates

Jenni King: 'In Kooyong the Victorian GfR campaign with targeted marginal electorates activity was excellent.'

This strategy allowed GFR to focus limited resources in the areas where it was most needed and likely to have the greatest effect. In particular, strong, active groups in safe Labor seats were able to provide support to those electorates where there was real hope of changing the government and where, in most cases, membership was small or ageing and less able to be active.

Booth analysis

Linda King's analysis of voting in the 2019 election and identification of the most marginal booths in the most marginal electorates in Victoria was critical.

Maryanne Barclay, 'Linda King's polling booth analysis was so helpful. Not only did it give us direction and focus, but also made what initially seemed an overwhelming task much more manageable'

Virginia Schneiders: "Linda's analysis was extremely helpful for us in a very diverse and widespread electorate.'

Sue Cranage: 'Linda's booth by booth analysis of the last election was our strategy guideline for our letter drop and street conversations'

Catherine Bearsley: "Without Linda King's clear electoral analysis of voting by each polling booth, it would have been easy to drown in the immensity of the task'.

Flying Squad

Both the concept of the Flying Squad (flexible use of available resources in most needed areas) and the setting up of a WhatsApp group of CC members (and other nominees) to facilitate implementation were seen as critical. Jenni King described it as 'game changing'.

- Requests for assistance were posted by electorate coordinators and pretty early in the piece Janet Joss identified the need for some coordination. On her initiative, coordinators posted their requests by Thursday each week (mostly) and Janet posted a weekly schedule of events each Friday for the following week. Coordinators of electorates in safe seats then communicated directly with the requesting coordinator to confirm numbers and event details.

- Both Cooper and Jaga Jaga then set up local Flying Squad Apps resulting in 16 active members in Cooper and 10 in Jaga Jaga. Melbourne also provided strong support, with some also from Macnamara and Maribyrnong. Outstandingly, marginal electorates also helped each other out (Casey, Chisholm, Deakin)
- Efforts were focussed at various times in Casey, Chisholm, Deakin, Kooyong, Dunkley, Goldstein.
- Activities included vigils and rallies outside MP's offices, at shopping centres and busy intersections and local markets, letterboxing, attendance at Raf Epstein broadcasts, handing out cards at pre-polling and polling booths.
- An added bonus, commented on by several people, was the connections forged between individuals and groups. Groups (especially the small ones in marginal electorates) felt supported and encouraged, those in the Flying Squad felt energised and useful, (and got to know each other on many car trips). The movement as a whole was strengthened. People very much felt part of a bigger movement.

Letterboxing

With the assistance of the Flying Squad in some cases, letterboxing was undertaken in Deakin, Chisholm, Dunkley, Kooyong, Goldstein, Higgins, Casey, Melbourne and Wills. A few commented that this was an effective way of both engaging new members and reenergising some existing members.

Materials

Several commented on the quality, quantity and availability of materials. Overall, the signs created purple visibility (inspiring both positive and negative reactions) and made GFR a recognisable force. The flyers provided more detailed information in situations where people had time to read, (special mention was made by Kooyong of the 'political prisoners' one which even excited the interest of John Pesutto). Clare Forbes commented that the itemisation of specific 'we wants' on the report card and the advocacy for compassion resonated strongly with the community.

Resourcing for campaign materials

Having spent substantial resources on the first runs of report cards and fliers in November to be ready for a possible December election, there was less than \$2000 in our account. Requests for new corflutes, flier and Vote for Change cards led the executive to make a on-off appeal for funds which was sent to all members. Donations immediately began coming in, and over the following 3-4 weeks we received more than \$11,500 which allowed us to order all of the new materials as requested by local electorate groups.

And what didn't work?

- The scorecard was scarcely used; being judged in most cases as involving too much work in a situation of limited resources. Casey sent the questions to all candidates but only two responded, and it was decided not to follow up. Flinders sent the questions to 5 candidates and all but the Liberals returned with positive answers. The Liberal candidate was contacted four times, to no avail. Melbourne sent them to all candidates and Janet Taylor followed up where necessary, collated replies and sent them to the Melbourne membership list. None of the three electorates who sent the questions used the scorecard template to tabulate answers and letterbox or hand out at polling booths. This was possibly a lost opportunity, but impossible to judge. My observation when handing out the ASRC Kooyong specific scorecard on election day was that voters who were interested enough to take our cards were also interested in the scorecard.
- Handing out leaflets at stations in most cases was felt to be ineffective, with travellers being too rushed and one station master aggressive.

What other actions did groups take/find most useful?

- Several groups met with candidates before the election, either inviting them to meetings or attending their offices or organised fora. Some will be in a position to build on this where they formed some sort of relationship with the successful candidate (Chisholm, Kooyong, Flinders).
- Some commented that they found markets, street stalls and busy street spots (e.g., outside the Nova, Fed Square) useful for actually engaging on conversations. At markets in particular, people seemed to have more time. It was also a useful way of attracting new members. Jaga Jaga did presentations to U3A groups which increased awareness and membership.
- Some collaborated with other local groups for letterboxing and rallies (e.g., Goldstein, Jaga Jaga)
- Many attended pre polling and polling day booths, including a number going to Box Hill (Kooyong, Deakin, Chisholm and Menzies). There was a constant presence at the Hawthorn pre polling booth where Davina's devotion aroused comments from other groups and from GFR members.
- Two groups (Casey and Kooyong) were successful in getting articles published in their respective local papers (Kooyong twice and Casey on the front page).

Shout outs

A number of people should be acknowledged:

- **Linda Sparrow** for her constant Tweeting. Our following grew exponentially, not least in Goldstein, Kooyong and Higgins where we were followed by some influential people. Some comments and photos went to many thousands of people. **Jane Touzeau** and **Helen Hill** kept up the barrage on Facebook.
- **Catherine Bearsley, Mary Williams** and **Maryanne Barclay** for persisting with the very difficult task of operating with a small, new group and trying to arouse those silent members in particular. On many occasions Catherine and **Anne Paul** were the only Chisholm members who attended vigils and Catherine continued to send encouraging messages to the rest of the troops.
- **Davina Lippman** for organising numerous rallies and vigils and attending every day at the polling booths in Kooyong.
- **Linda Sparrow** and **Ann Renkin** for mentoring and support for the new group in Dunkley
- **Linda King** for her painstaking work in analysing voting patterns in marginal electorates in 2019 and follow up analysis on how it panned out in those electorates in 2022.
- **Janet Joss** for her fabulous organisation of the Flying Squad across the network and more specifically in Cooper
- **Members of the Flying Squad** (particularly Jaga Jaga, Cooper and Melbourne who provided consistent and ongoing support in the marginal electorates.
- **Jean Ker Walsh** for writing and, with **Julie Cattlin**, design of our fabulous materials.
- **All those who responded so positively to our one-off call for donations** to fund the resourcing of our campaign. There were about 110 donors, some making repeat gifts, and we raised from them more than \$11,500.
- Additional Note: The work of co-chair **Margaret Browne** in preparing this report was warmly acknowledged by the Co-ordinating Committee at its meeting 15 June 2022.

Lessons learned

- Early organisation, at both the central and local levels proved very effective, providing purpose, allowing proper planning and proving generally efficient
- The general public is generally ignorant about the appalling situation in which thousands of refugees find themselves. Many assume it all ended with the Park Hotel.

- Engaging non-active members is hard work. Different strategies work for different people. We need to do more work on this in the future.

And finally, how successful were we?

- Members of the former government lost their seats in Chisholm and Higgins (to Labor), and in Kooyong and Goldstein (to Teals). Dunkley and McEwen retained their Labor members.
- Casey, Deakin and Flinders were all retained by the former government. However, of the 2019 marginal booths:
 - In Deakin 7 Liberal held booths swung towards the ALP, one had a significant Greens vote and 9 ALP held booths swung further to the ALP.
 - In Casey, 3 Liberal held booths swung to the ALP and 2 had significant Green votes. 3 ALP booths swung further to the ALP. Overall, there was a significant swing away from the former government.
 - In Flinders, 2 Liberal held marginal booths swung to the ALP, and 7 ALP held booths swung further to the ALP.
- Overall, in the marginal electorates we targeted, there was a movement for change and a better government. We were a vital part of that as a constant, respectful presence made up of older women who care.

As Julia Gillard said: *It doesn't explain everything, but it doesn't explain nothing.*

EXECUTIVE ELECTION – CALL FOR NOMINATIONS

With the election behind us, the term and mandate of the current Executive is at an end.

We need now to choose and transition to the team to lead us into the next stage.

The Executive Committee works with the Coordinating Committee to provide leadership to achieve the movement's strategic objective and aims.

In consultation with the Coordinating Committee, the executive provides leadership as it:

- ⇒ Listens and responds to refugee voices
- ⇒ Develops and sets the strategic direction of the movement
- ⇒ Makes and implements decisions on key issues and actions
- ⇒ Represents the movement in engagement with senior levels of Government
- ⇒ Keeps members regularly informed through newsletters, website, and social media
- ⇒ Creates and approves materials to ensure consistency of messaging
- ⇒ Grows the movement through outreach, publicity and relationship building
- ⇒ Maintains membership records
- ⇒ Manages finances and resourcing
- ⇒ Contributes to research and makes submissions
- ⇒ Works within the broader refugee movement to develop strategies and joint campaigns

The Executive operates best when it can draw on members' skills and experience in:

- Strategic leadership and issues management
- Local community activism and relationships with refugees
- Lobbying and links with other refugee organisations
- Writing for submissions, news and media including social media management
- Financial management and resourcing
- Familiarity with government and legislative frameworks
- Database skills management and abilities with spreadsheets, online platforms
- Collaborative approaches to sharing the workload of a small volunteer team

Do you have some of these skills and interests? Please consider a nomination. The necessary form and an information sheet are sent with this newsletter and will be on our website.

MARKING REFUGEE WEEK 2022 “Healing”

BENDIGO G4R LIBRARY DISPLAY



ADELAIDE VIGIL FOR MANUS and NAURU



**We must end Indefinite Detention
And Settle the Refugees**

2pm Sun 17th July

Leave from Tarntanyanga / 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



And FINALLY....

We could not end this edition of our newsletter without paying tribute to **Sr Brigid Arthur AO**, co-founder and project co-ordinator (with Libby Saunders) of the Melbourne-based Brigidine Asylum Seeker Project (BASP).

Brigid has been named an Officer of the Order of Australia (AO) for her distinguished service to social welfare, particularly asylum seekers and refugees, and to Catholic Education.

Untiring in her determination to have people seeking asylum treated with respect and justice, this 87-year-old woman is both a symbol and an inspiration of what is needed in our communities. She is a dear friend of Grandmothers for Refugees and we wish her well.

Donations to BASP may be made here [You can help - Brigidine Asylum Seekers Project \(BASP\)](#)

With best wishes until next month when we look forward to introducing the new Executive Group.

Jean, Margaret, Linda and Jane