



Greens Action Kit

REFUGEES

This Action Kit is designed to help you take action against the Government's refugee policies.

It includes: **background information on various refugee issues; materials to photocopy and use; tips and assistance in getting active.**

The material is designed to be suitable for Greens groups, and for non-members who want to challenge the Government's refugee policies.

With the help of this Kit, we hope that you will be able to join the thousands of Greens and other refugee activists in combating the rhetoric and misinformation that has been spread by the Government and the media in regard to refugees.

For further information or assistance please email senator.nettle@aph.gov.au, or phone Senator Kerry Nettle's office on 02 9241 6663.

The Kit contains:

- ◆ Background information on refugee issues
- ◆ The Greens refugee position and alternative
- ◆ What The Greens have been doing
- ◆ Background info & facts on mandatory detention
- ◆ Background info & facts on temporary protection visas (TPV)
- ◆ Form letters on various issues
- ◆ Leaflets to copy
- ◆ A petition
- ◆ Tips on getting active
- ◆ List of refugee rights groups and resources



ORDER FORM – Greens Action Kit “Refugees”

Name

Address

.....

Greens Local Group (if applicable)

Email..... phone

Please send me:

_____ Greens Action Kits “Refugees”

and / or

_____ Petition sheets

_____ Fliers

_____ Form letters

I would like to receive more information about the Greens campaign for refugees.

POST: Greens Senator Kerry Nettle, GPO Box 36 Sydney 2001 / FAX: 02 9241 6680



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BACKGROUND

Australia is a signatory to the *United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights*. Under Article 14 of this declaration, **“everyone has the right to seek and enjoy in other countries asylum from persecution”**. Australia is also a signatory to the *United Nations Convention & Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees (1951 & 1967)*. This document recognises that when people take extreme and desperate measures to escape war, persecution and other threats, it is often impossible, impractical or downright dangerous to arrange for proper documentation. In recognition of this fact, the Convention **“allows for a person seeking asylum to enter a country without authorisation”**.

The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees estimates the number of refugees worldwide at 20.5 million. A new refugee is created every 21 seconds. For a land with “boundless plains to share”, Australia takes very few refugees. Australia takes only about 12,000 people per year under the humanitarian program compared to 20,000 per year in the early 1980s. Our geography means that only 4174 asylum seekers reached Australia in the year 2000 compared to about 300,000 who reached Europe.

“People do not arrive illegally. That is a mistake. A person is entitled under Australian and International law to make an application for refugee asylum in a country when they allege that they are escaping persecution or would be persecuted if they returned. That is simply the law.”

- Justice Marcus Einfeld

In August 2001, the Howard Government fabricated a crisis over the MV Tampa’s rescue of 438 asylum seekers. It used this fabricated crisis to vilify, demonise and spread lies about asylum seekers. With the help of the media and a compliant opposition, it whipped up a hysteria that dominated the federal election campaign. Traditional xenophobic fears, previously articulated by Pauline Hanson and the *White Australia policy*, were channelled into a new fear of the “queue jumpers”, “the illegals”, “people who’d throw their children overboard”, and mixed in with jingoistic rhetoric about “border protection”.

Since this dark episode, the situation for asylum seekers has deteriorated. Under Operation Relex the Australian Navy has actively turned around overcrowded and unseaworthy boats. Others have been picked up, dumped and virtually abandoned in Nauru and on Manus Island under the dubious “Pacific Solution”. Not so lucky were the 353 asylum seekers who lost their lives when their boat named SIEV-X sank.

Those in detention continue to languish in terrible conditions without hope. The Government regularly vilifies those it has incarcerated. It bribes, threatens and attempts to deport people back to the situation from which they fled, and spends a large amount of taxpayers’ money on court cases to keep children behind the razor wire.

Those released from detention are granted Temporary Protection Visas (TPVs) which make them second class citizens in the community. They have no access to many basic services vital for settling in the community. They are denied the right to travel to see their family or access to the family reunion program. The temporary nature of this protection visa also means that refugees must live with the uncertainty hanging over their future.



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THE GREENS POSITION

The Greens believe that Australia's treatment of asylum seekers and refugees should be in accordance with all United Nations Conventions. The Greens believe asylum seekers should be treated with compassion and dignity.

The Greens are opposed to:

- × Mandatory detention;
- × The "Pacific Solution";
- × The excision of various islands from the migration zone;
- × Forced deportation of asylum seekers;
- × Temporary protection visas;
- × The demonisation of asylum seekers.

The Greens Alternative:

- ✓ Establishes reception centres for initial identity and health checks.
- ✓ Allows asylum seekers to move into the community with appropriate support while their claims are assessed.
- ✓ Abolishes the Temporary Protection Visa and grants Permanent Protection Visas
- ✓ Provides appropriate support to assist settlement in the Australian community
- ✓ Increases the humanitarian intake as a proportion of the total immigration intake.

WHAT ARE THE GREENS DOING?

Greens Senators Bob Brown & Kerry Nettle and Greens MP Michael Organ have been working to raise and expose refugee issues in the Parliament and media.

All Greens MPs in New South Wales and the ACT have visited detainees at Villawood Detention Centre.

Senator Bob Brown moved a disallowance motion against regulations excising Australian territory from the migration zone. Senator Kerry Nettle moved a motion calling for the suspension of deportations to Iran.

"The razor wire should be removed and the detention centres should be closed and the refugees should be welcomed into our country"

– Senator Bob Brown

At a State level, NSW Greens parliamentarians have campaigned to have NSW provide the same level of services and support for Temporary Protection Visa holders that Permanent Protection Visa holders receive.

South Australian Greens MP, Kris Hanna, has made regular visits to Baxter and Woomera detention centres and is a founding member of the Refugee Advocacy Service of SA. The WA Greens have also been active in campaigning for refugee rights and in support of those locked up in detention centres in WA.

Greens parliamentarians have spoken at a variety of refugee rights rallies and Greens members have been involved in the organisation of pro-refugee actions.



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MANDATORY DETENTION – BACKGROUND & FACTS

Not necessary

- Mandatory detention of asylum seekers was not used in Australia prior to 1992.
- Australia is the only Western country that mandatorily detains asylum seekers while their claims are being heard.
- Asylum seekers are not dangerous to society. To date, ASIO has not confirmed that any asylum seeker has been assessed as a risk to security. Indeed, it is ridiculous to suggest that a terrorist would come by leaky boat and present themselves for background scrutiny and assessment by the authorities.

Illegal

- Under United Nations conventions **“everyone has the right to seek and enjoy in other countries asylum from persecution”** and the conventions **“allow for a person seeking asylum to enter a country without authorisation”**.
- The detention of innocent people, and the conditions in the detention centres, breach the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.
- The detention and deprivation of children is a direct breach of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.
- The United Nations Commissioner for Human Rights released a report on mandatory detention in July 2002 which concluded that basic legal rights are denied in contravention of international law - detainees are unable to seek judicial review of detention because the Migration Act requires all **“unlawful non-citizens”** to be detained, regardless of their circumstances.*
- This is a view supported by Amnesty International: *“Detention of all asylum seekers without charge or judicial review amounts to arbitrary detention. It this aspect of detention - ongoing and prolonged with no notification of release - that amounts to a serious violation of the rights to liberty and freedom from arbitrary detention”*.
- The Family Court has found that the detention of children is illegal - although this is still being appealed by the Government.

A United Nations Commissioner for Human Rights report on mandatory detention found that men, women and children who had been in detention for months, and sometimes one or two years, were “prisoners without having committed any offence. Their only fault was that they had left their native home and sought to find refuge or a better life on the Australian soil.” (Report of Justice P. N. Bhagwati, Regional Advisor for Asia and the Pacific of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights Mission to Australia , 24 May to 2 June 2002; Human Rights and Immigration Detention in Australia, p 7)

Costly

- Incarcerating a refugee costs between \$150 – \$200+ per person per day or \$50,000 – \$70,000 per year**.
- Living in the community would cost far less – in the order of \$20 - \$60 per person per day – \$7,000 – \$22,000 per year*. Refugees living in the community can also work and make a positive economic, cultural and community contribution to Australian society. **Figures from Milbour Consulting 2003 – Improving Outcomes and Reducing Costs for Asylum Seekers

* taken from an article by Jake Skeers, 5 Aug 2002, <http://www.wsws.org/articles/2002/aug2002/refu-a05.shtml>).



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Cruel

- Life in detention centres is harsh. It includes daily musters, searches, gates, bars and fences.
- Asylum seekers are surrounded by razor wire and electric fences, kept under constant surveillance by closed-circuit cameras and guards. In Baxter Detention Centre the inmates are completely isolated from the outside world: solid fences prevent them from seeing even the desert landscape outside. All they can see is the sky.
- Systematic mistreatment – there have been numerous reports of guards and DIMIA officials making the detainees life hard and miserable through the denial of rights and needs.
- Health is not adequately serviced. One boy in Port Headland Detention Centre has lost sight in one eye from a preventable disease because he was denied permission to see an eye specialist. Detainees often say that any health complaint is treated with Panadol and water.
- The use of solitary confinement is common and often arbitrary. People are put in small isolation cells for days, weeks or even months. The Refugee Advocacy Service argues that conditions in the cells in Baxter are close to sensory deprivation: no reading material or other activities are provided, the window is frosted glass so they can't see out and they have virtually no contact with other detainees.
- Indefinite 'sentence' – not knowing when the ordeal will end is one of the most debilitating aspects of mandatory detention. Hope quickly disappears in the drudgery of incarceration.

“I have been in detention centre for about three years. My protection visa is refused for irrational reasons. Now I don't know what will happen to me. I don't have any choice. I felt that I have done something wrong. Because of that reason I am in this hellhole for unmention time. I think prison is better than here. In prison, the sentence is mentioned, but here you don't know how long you will be here” – Abdul (From Nothing to Zero: Letters from Refugees in Australia's Detention Centres, Lonely Planet 2003)

- Several psychiatric studies (Steel & Mares) have revealed that detention is incredibly damaging to the mental health of those detained. Levels of Depression and stress disorders are almost universal among detainees. Suicidal thoughts and acts of self harm are extremely high.

The Real Reason – why impose mandatory detention if it is cruel, unnecessary, illegal and costly?

Political prisons

The Liberal Party used the arrival of the MV Tampa to manufacture fear and a crisis over refugees. It exploited community xenophobia and fear and then boasted its credentials to deal with this “crisis” using rhetoric about “border protection”. It was an effective political strategy for the Coalition, and increasingly harsh mandatory detention is the by-product. Those who seek asylum are being held so that the Howard Government can appear “tough on refugees” – they are essentially political prisoners held in political prisons.

“They are keeping me alive but have taken away my youth, my freedom, my self-esteem and my dignity” – an Asylum Seeker (From Nothing to Zero)

Dehumanisation

Xenophobia and racism are only sustainable if asylum seekers are consistently presented as different to ordinary Australians. This is why the government has consistently vilified them as “wealthy queue jumpers”, “illegals”, “terrorists”, and “people who'd throw their children overboard”. These lies have been exposed as the Australian people learn the stories of individual asylum seekers. To avoid this, asylum seekers are kept isolated from the population. This is why these political prisons are located in remote parts of the country. This is why the media is barred from entering the detention centres. This is why even lawyers and doctors can not take cameras or mobile phones into the detention centres.



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THE PACIFIC SOLUTION – OUT OF SIGHT, OUT OF MIND!

After the government manufactured the Tampa crisis, the “Pacific Solution” was invented so that the government could look tough, avoid responsibility for the refugees and take them out of the international spotlight. Australia exported its responsibility by bribing Nauru, a cash-strapped Pacific island, and later Papua New Guinea, to imprison the refugees on their shores.

Unnecessary - The Tampa incident was a manufactured crisis. A trickle of asylum seekers arrive in Australia each year, compared with hundreds of thousands arriving in Europe and millions on the move in Africa and Asia. Australia hosts one refugee for every 1,583 people (1:1583) compared to 1:530 in Britain and 1:76 in Tanzania. If Australia had accepted those onboard the Tampa without a fuss virtually nobody would have noticed.

A political solution – not a humanitarian or legal solution - The asylum seekers on the Tampa and on other boats could and should have been brought to Australia for processing. There was no humanitarian or legal reason why these asylum seekers could not be assessed on Australian soil. It was purely a political solution which has left several hundred people stranded and isolated in terrible conditions on Nauru, cost a lot of public money and goodwill in the Pacific.

Costly - Mandatory detention on Nauru and Manus Island is extremely expensive. The cost per detainee per day is in the order of \$200 – \$400, compared to \$150 – \$200 for detention in Australia, and \$20 – \$60 for community settlement. The hundreds of millions of dollars squandered on the Pacific Solution would be better spent settling asylum seekers in the community or providing beneficial aid to Pacific countries such as Nauru.

THE REFUGEE DECISION MAKING PROCESS

There are three issues that impact upon the accuracy of who can and who cannot be considered a refugee in Australia. They are:

1) The United Nations Refugee Convention – a narrow definition

Article 1 of the UN Refugee Convention defines a refugee as:

"a person who is outside his/her country of nationality or habitual residence; has a well-founded fear of persecution because of his/her race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group or political opinion; and is unable or unwilling to avail himself/herself of the protection of that country, or to return there, for fear of persecution." (United Nations Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees, 1951)

A critical point to be made about the UN Refugee Convention is that people fleeing hunger, disease or war are not considered refugees. The Department of Immigration & Multicultural & Indigenous Affairs (DIMIA) uses this narrow definition which excludes many people in clear need of protection.

2) The Refugee Review Process – compromised independence, no justice

The Refugee Review Tribunal (RRT) is meant to be an independent body that reviews the decisions of DIMIA. However, its members are selected by the Minister for Immigration, who also decides whether their contracts are renewed or terminated. This puts pressure on tribunal members to make decisions in line with what the Government wants rather than conducting a genuinely independent review. Asylum seekers do not have a right to legal representation at the RRT.

The RRT is not bound by the rules that courts are bound by regarding evidence and legal process, and often translation services are inadequate

3) Structure of the Migration Act

Due to the structure of the Migration Act, there is almost no ability for asylum seekers to appeal flawed RRT decisions in the courts. The only avenue left for asylum seekers is a direct appeal to the Minister.



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CHILDREN IN DETENTION – LIVING A NIGHTMARE

Illegal – Australia's ratification of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRoC) obliges it to maintain standards to protect children's rights and to provide them with humanitarian assistance.

Cruel and Damaging – Growing up surrounded by bars, razor wire and adults in a distressed and depressed state is cruel and damaging to the physical, emotional and mental health of children. Parents, who have often faced trauma in their homeland and now face indefinite detention or deportation often find it very difficult or are unable to provide proper care for their children. Young children find it difficult to form proper attachment relationship with their parents. Some children are unable to play properly, others mimic the guard-detainee relationship or acts of self harm in their play.

“The government policy treat us in awful way. They put us in cages and put us in something like zero area. I suggest to call the detention centres human zoo, that is correct name for this situation. There are fences, bars, razor wire, same thing like jail or zoo. I cried a lot when I saw two year old child behind the fence. What did he do? What is his fault and offence to keep him in this way? I am ashamed and feel lowly and humble. We feel we are in bottom level of humans and we are less from other peoples.” – an asylum seeker (From Nothing to Zero)

Children in detention often witness detainees' self-harm, attempted suicide and conflict with guards. This often psychologically scars children. Children have stopped eating and drinking and gone mute.

“A lot of kids are severely distressed and they're weeping, they're mute, they can't eat, they can't socialise, they can't play”

– Dr Michael Dudley, Suicide Prevention Australia.

A study of the mental health of children in detention conducted by 12 authors, including psychiatrists from the Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Psychiatry, the University of NSW and the NSW Institute of Psychiatry found:

- Children were mostly healthy before being locked up.
- After two years in Australian detention camps, they were all suffering at least one psychiatric illness and more than half of them had multiple disorders - most commonly major depression and post-traumatic stress disorder.
- That figure was ten times above the norm for mental illness - the highest ever recorded for children in modern medical literature.

“When one child ask her parents why we are in cage, I can't give to child any answer. What answer can you give a child. I get nervous and I must eat tablet for sleep. I am impatient of such injustice” – an Asylum Seeker (From Nothing to Zero)

The Courts – Efforts have been made through the legal system to have the courts order the release of children in detention. There has been some success with at least one family's children being released. However, the Government uses taxpayer money to appeal every decision in order to keep children in detention.



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TEMPORARY PROTECTION VISAS – BACKGROUND & FACTS

Australia is the only country to grant temporary status to refugees who have been through a full asylum determination system and who have been recognised as genuinely in need of protection. The system imposes difficult emotional strain on individuals who looked to the Australian public for support and instead found alienation and despair.

What is a Temporary Protection Visa (TPV)?

From October 1999, TPVs have been issued to refugees who arrive in Australia without prior authorisation. Rather than be granted permanent protection they are only given a three-year temporary visa. Those who are still in need of protection after this three-year period must apply for another protection visa. Those who fail to reprove a claim for protection and do not leave can be re-detained and deported.

The 7-Day Rule - Additional laws were introduced on the 21 September 2001 denying permanent residence in Australia to any refugee who has spent more than 7 days in another country where they could have sought protection en route to Australia. Those who fall into this category will never be eligible for permanent protection or family reunion rights and will only be given temporary protection rights.

Access to Services - TPV holders are not able to receive the full range of benefits available to permanent visa holders; instead their access to government services is limited. They are only eligible for Special Benefit Social Security payments, which has a strict range of eligibility criteria attached to it, and temporary Medicare cards. TPV holders are able to work but their status as TPV holders and lack of access to other services can hinder their employment opportunities.

What Services Are Not Provided - TPV holders are not eligible for settlement support services, or federally funded English language programs and their access to the education system is reliant on state governments. They are denied family reunion rights (especially important to refugees who are often separated from their family when they flee) and an automatic right of return to Australia if they leave the country. It is important to note that many who died on the SIEV X tragedy were family members of TPV holders who were trying to reach Australia to be re-united with their loved ones.

Breaching Australia's Obligations under International Law

Article 31 of the *1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees* emphasises that refugees should not be punished for their mode of entry. The Federal Government is effectively punishing the most desperate refugees who reach Australia without formal permission by granting only TPVs and denying them access to the full range of services available to Permanent Protection Visa holders.

Subverting the Idea of Temporary Protection - The Federal Government's application of TPVs misuses the concept of temporary protection. Temporary protection was introduced as a means to deal with large influxes of refugees in emergency situations, particularly in Europe where the overwhelming number of arriving asylum seekers makes it physically impossible to process recipients on an individual, case-by-case basis. Given Australia's relative remoteness in comparison to land-locked countries sharing borders with other countries in conflict, the Australian Government does not have the same motivations or mode of justification for using the TPV system. The extension and manipulation of this system by the Federal government is inconsistent with the spirit of the system introduced under the UN Convention.



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Negative Repercussions of the TPV System - There are many elements of the TPV system that have been found to be inadequate.

Denying TPV holders access to the English language training provided to permanent visa holders further hinders integration into mainstream society and limits their ability to find employment.

TPVs have been found to have a significant psychological effect on holders.

- **Psychologically Damaging**

Temporary protection places holders in a state of uncertainty increasing their levels of stress and anxiety. This, coupled with the psychological trauma experienced in coming to Australia, leads many to view the provision of a TPV as a form of secondary psychological imprisonment after being freed from detention. These combine to form a feeling of a loss of hope and despair.

- **Legacy of Detention**

Many people who are eventually granted TPVs are traumatised from their experience in detention. It will therefore take a long time and a significant amount of effort to rehabilitate these people, which subsequently has a long-term impact on society.

- **Denied Family Reunion Rights**

One of the most brutal elements of TPVs is the inability of holders to bring their family to Australia. A large proportion of TPV holders are men who made difficult journeys to Australia so that their families could arrive via safer means through family repatriation schemes – finding out that they are not entitled to these benefits is devastating.

Australia further subverts the process of protection by requiring TPV holders to repeat the refugee status determination procedure every three years. This places an additional psychological burden on holders who can never be certain that their visas will be cancelled or revoked leaving refugees faced with the prospect of being sent back to countries that are unstable and dangerous. This is significant considering the majority of TPV holders are either from Iraq or Afghanistan, countries that the Australian Government acknowledges as being unstable.

Shifting the Burden

The Federal Government has shifted the burden of this issue onto the states. So far the only state to rise to the challenge has been Queensland, which has moved to provide services to TPV holders equal to those of permanent visa holders. South Australia and Victoria also provide a wide range of services to TPV holders. New South Wales, however, still refuses to adequately support TPV holders. This has resulted in local governments and non-government organisations having to fill the gap and provide assistance with accommodation, bond money, employment and English language courses. Whilst these groups provide a valuable service, given their limited resources they are often unable to cope with the demand. It is unrealistic to presume that these groups can continue to compensate for the shortcomings of government policy.

Premier Bob Carr argues that Sydney is “bursting at the seams” and that the government’s provision of the services needed by TPV holders will only attract more people to settle in NSW. This fails to acknowledge that NSW accounts for approx. 50% of TPV holders despite providing minimal services. People tend to come to Sydney because of friends, family, community or employment. By not providing services to these refugees the government is adding to the cycle of poverty and dependency that many TPV holders face as well as establishing further long-term burdens for TPV holders and society as a whole. TPV’s sole function is to promote the short-term political wills of populist politicians. They do not prevent people from coming to Australia nor do they provide adequate protection for them once they arrive - they promote long-term harm and suffering for all involved and their discriminatory nature ignores international conventions.



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WHAT YOU CAN DO!

Write a letter to the minister or shadow minister or your local MP or Senator, or organise a letter writing campaign.

These are the people who make the decisions and they are also meant to represent you! Ask them to justify their policies and actions and demand change. Use the pro-formas provided with this Action Kit, or write your own letter.

Take part in a letter writing campaign organised by Julian Burnside QC.

These letters are concise and targeted. Go to: www.julianburnside.com

Write a Letter to the Editor or call up Talk-Back radio

This can be an effective way of getting refugee issues on the agenda for public debate. Details of how to access these media outlets is available at www.kerrynettle.org.au

Contact your local refugee support or action group

There are many groups which organise support for refugees in detention and TPV holders in the community. There are also groups which organise political action and protest to change public opinion and policy on refugee issues. A list of contact groups in your area is included in this kit.

Write a letter to a refugee in detention

Many people around Australia are now writing letters to people in detention centres. The comfort and encouragement this gives is enormous. It is one of the simplest and most effective ways you can help refugees. Contact letters@spareroomsforrefugees.com and they will send you a list of names of people in various detention centres.

Visit the people in detention

Anyone can visit the refugees in detention. All you need is the name of a detainee. It is best to contact a group or individual who already visits so you can coordinate the most appropriate time and appropriate person.

Organise a petition

This is an easy and very effective way to get people involved. Included in this Action Kit is a petition you can use, or you can set up your own. All you need to set up a petition is a clear statement in a basic format, and a good idea about what to do with it when it's signed.

Any **statement** that is going to be used in a petition should be:

- Short – no more than two or three paragraphs
- Clear – use simple, direct language
- Action oriented – a petition should make a specific demand for action eg. That children not be kept in detention, or that all Temporary Protection Visa (TPV) holders be granted full protection visas.

Petitions usually follow a **basic format**. They:

- are addressed to a particular individual (eg. Prime Minister John Howard or the Federal Minister for Immigration, Amanda Vanstone) or an organisation (eg. The Senate), using formal titles and full names;
- require the names, addresses AND signatures of the people who sign (make sure you clearly indicate and leave enough room for all this information); and
- have a copy of the statement at the top of each page.



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There may be **specific requirements**, including a certain form of words, for different levels of Government. You can find this information on the internet or ask your local MP or Councillor for details.

It is essential to be clear about **what you're going to do with the petition** when it's signed. This sounds simple but it can be tricky. For example, if you would like your petition against mandatory detention presented to the House of Representatives (where John Howard is), you need to find an MP to do it. The Greens in the Senate (and Greens MP Michael Organ in the House of Representatives) are always happy to table petitions that fit with our refugees rights stand.

Holding a stall

A stall is a great way to get information out into the community. This is especially true on refugee issues as there has been a lot of misrepresentation and misinformation spread by politicians and the media. A visible pro-refugee presence in the community is important in breaking through the ignorance and myths on this issue.

If you would like to hold a stall in your local area The Greens can provide a 'stall kit' including hints on how to organise and run a stall, and information to use and distribute, as well as stickers, badges and T-shirts to sell. Contact Kerry Nettle's office if you would like a stall kit.

Lobby your local MP

You would be surprised at how few people bother to write, phone, fax or visit their local MP to let them know their views on issues they are interested in.

Most MPs do not have access to special polling or targeted information about the views of their electorate, except at election time. Your personal message is therefore very important. Information about what electorate you are in and contacts for your local Federal MP are at www.aph.gov.au.

Get a motion through your local council

Council Resolutions are powerful because that they represent the democratic expression of the views of a shire or group of suburbs. Council support for your campaign can be a significant influence on views in the local area, and also bring practical support like public banners, access to professional staff, or free meeting rooms.

In order to get the Council to pass a motion in support of refugee rights, you will need to enlist the support of a majority of your elected Councillors. The first step is to identify key pro-refugee Councillors who are prepared to support you. Greens Councillors are, of course, a great place to start! For a list of Greens local Councillors in NSW see www.nsw.greens.org.au - for other states check www.greens.org.au.

When you have found a Councillor to help, they will be able to give you information about the specific processes followed by the Council, and the form of words the motion might need.

Numerous councils have declared their council area a "Refugee Welcome Zone"

This Declaration is simply a commitment in spirit to welcoming refugees into our community, upholding the human rights of refugees, demonstrating compassion for refugees and enhancing cultural and religious diversity in our community. By making this declaration it is hoped that local government will be encouraged in their continuing efforts to achieve these aims and in partnership with the community develop new initiatives to promote the human rights of refugees. It is also hoped that in signing this Declaration, other local Councils will be encouraged to do the same.



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CONTACT DETAILS OF PRO REFUGEE GROUPS & RESOURCES

<p>Refugee Action Coalition NSW www.racnsw.org racnsw-subscribe@yahoo.com Meet: every Monday, 6-7:30pm Level One, Teachers Federation Building, 33 Mary St Surry Hills</p>	<p>Asylum Seekers Centre 38 Nobbs St Surry Hills NSW 2010 9361 5606 admin@asylumseekerscentre.org.au</p>
<p>A Just Australia www.ajustaustralia.com PO Box 559 Surry Hills NSW 2010 Australia Tel: (02) 9310 3900 email: mail@justrefugeeprograms.com.au</p>	<p>National Anti-Deportation Alliance – network formed to combat the deportation of asylum seekers. www.westnet.com.au/jackhsmi/nada1.htm</p>
<p>ChilOut (Children Out of Detention) www.chilout.org friends@chilout.org</p>	<p>Sparerooms4refugees. – project to help asylum seekers enter the Australian community. www.spareroomsforrefugees.com</p>
<p>Rural Australians for Refugees (RAR) Branches all over regional and rural Australia. Go to their web site to find your nearest branch. www.ruralaustraliansforrefugees.org</p>	<p>Julian Burnside QC leading pro bono refugee lawyer and advocate www.julianburnside.com</p>
<p>Friends of Refugees North West – A group based in North-Western Sydney that campaigns for refugee rights. Tel: (02) 9869 1737</p>	<p>Refugee Action Collective – Canberra www.refugeeaction.org</p>
<p>Inner West Refugee Action Group Tel: 0414 908 908</p>	<p>JAS (Justice for Asylum Seekers). http://www.melb.catholic.aust.com/topics/migrant7.htm</p>
<p>Balmain for Refugees PO Box 90, Balmain 2041</p>	<p>Refugee Claimants Support Centre www.refugees.org.au</p>
<p>Tas for Refugees www.anglicare-tas.org.au/refugees/index.html Tel: (03) 6234 3510</p>	<p>Edmund Rice Centre – researches asylum seeker issues. Excellent fact sheets and information. www.erc.org.au</p>
<p>Refugee Council of Australia www.refugeecouncil.org.au/ Tel: (02) 9660 5300</p>	<p>Project SafeCom.Inc www.westnet.com.au/jackhsmi/refugees.htm</p>
<p>TPV Support Group Meets in Auburn, 3rd Wed of month Contact via Refugee Council of Australia</p>	<p>HREOC Human Rights & Equal Opportunity Commission www.hreoc.gov.au/human_rights/asylum_seekers</p>
<p>Refugee Advocacy Service – assists asylum seekers with applications. Tel: (02) 9211 4001 Suite 8c, 46-56 Kippax St, Surry Hills 2010</p>	<p>Amnesty International www.amnesty.org.au/refugees</p>
<p>RASSA Refugee Advocacy Service of South Australia www.rassa.org.au/ rassa@rassa.org.au Phone (08) 8211 9097 Fax : (08) 8211 6955</p>	<p>Hope Caravan - travels to detention centres campaigning on behalf of refugees. www.hopecaravan.com</p>



Greens Action Kit¹³

REFUGEES

