

Election 2016

The Watergardens group met with Vic Aboriginal Affairs Minister, Natalie Hutchins in 2015 on CIE.



Amnesty SA
Refugee Action
Network

The SA Refugee network present Nick Zenophon with the Childhood memories book in 2015.



The Townsville group outside local MP's office in 2016.

Webinar protocols

Please mute yourself as background noise can be loud and distracting. People who are unable to mute themselves will be muted by facilitator.

If you have questions/comments etc click on the hand icon and we will come to you at regular intervals.

If your microphone doesn't work you can use the question box to ask questions - we will check those at intervals too

Please do participate using either of the above methods.



Tonight's aims

Familiarise yourself with Amnesty's election plans

Understand the need to engage with all parties in an election context

The importance of Amnesty's political independence



The state of play

The election is likely to be held 2 July, with the official campaign starting in mid May

Labor need to win 21 seats to win government, but if the Coalition loses 16 they lose their majority - which means a hung parliament

Current polling suggests the election will be close, but the Government is favoured to be returned

Amnesty is losing numerous friendly MPs on both sides of politics: a record number of MPs are retiring



Amnesty is independent

This cannot be stressed enough: Amnesty campaigns on issues, we do not support parties. We are independent and politically neutral.

Elections are the most partisan time on the political calendar: it can be tricky to navigate

Be conscious of what you say on social media: no endorsements from Amnesty groups



Independence, again...

The *Charities Commission* defines what is and isn't ok for an organisation such as Amnesty to do during a campaign

We can advance public debate and lobby for changes in policy, or oppose policies our organisation disagrees with

We can't promote or oppose a political party or candidate for public office



A reason for cross-party campaigning

If we started a five year campaign -- CIE for example -- in March 2011, then by March 2016:

- Australia changed governments and has had four prime ministers in this time.
- NSW changed government once and premiers three times
- Victoria changed government once and premiers three times

- Qld changed government twice
- SA changed premiers
- TAS changed government

- NT changed government, and had three different chief ministers
- ACT changed chief ministers

SO: We need to speak to *all parties*, not just governments



2016 election - our plans

- For us, the election has two distinct halves
- Leadup and campaign: priority will be to raise human rights issues
- Post-campaign: re-establish or begin relationship with your new MPs

Our overarching national goals will be to:

- elevate issues related to Indigenous youth justice (CIE) as a matter of national importance
- help re-frame the political debate around refugee issues
- ensure candidates *know* there is a strong constituency for human rights issues

We won't tell you what issues you can or cannot raise.

Community is Everything is AIA's 2016 priority, but if your group has a long-running issue, don't hesitate to focus on that.



A human rights agenda for the next Australian government **- Amnesty's election policy document**

- We are finalising Amnesty's election our policy document, *A human rights agenda for the next Australian government*.
- This will be a set of calls covering all of our campaigns, and a resource for groups to use both in the lead-up to, and post-election.
- The aim of this document is to make sure everyone - from our National Director to our activists - is making one set of calls on all candidates
- A concise, one stop shop version of our campaign calls
- It will be launched at some point during the election campaign



Leading up to the campaign

- Elections are 150 local campaigns: focus on your local community, not the national debate
- Ensure you are on your MPs' and candidates mailing lists
 - Call party offices if you can't find out online
- Be prepared to attend election events when they're announced
- Write letters to the editor of your local newspaper about issues which are relevant, or responding to announcements; if in regional Australia - and feel up to it - wade into talkback.
- It's fine to seek meetings with MPs and candidates, but be aware that they are extraordinarily busy during a campaign: but, they are looking for votes!

During the campaign

- Attend election events: candidate forums, town halls meetings, street stalls etc, and ask questions, pin candidates down on Amnesty's campaign issues
- Amnesty's election policy platform will provide the basis for you to campaign, and be a quick guide to what our calls are on a number of campaign issues
- Be wary of organising your own events: without representation from all parties, there can be a perception of bias
- Remember: candidates are busy, but they will try to be responsive during a campaign - they want your vote, after all

During the campaign - cont.

- Local media is important: write letters to the editor of your local newspaper about issues which are relevant, or responding to announcements
- Call your MP's or candidate's office to express Amnesty's views -- feel free to email or write letters, but during a campaign, you may not receive a response
- Seek meetings with MPs and candidates, but be aware that they are extraordinarily busy during a campaign
- Remember to feed relevant information and activities to your Community Organiser



Social media

- Social media is a great way to keep in touch with what your local candidates are up to: make sure you 'like' or follow every candidate
- But it can have pitfalls: we don't endorse parties or candidates. As a general rule, if commenting on policies, be measured. When using your Amnesty page, criticism should **only** be based on human rights concerns.
- **Remember:** after the election, one candidate is going to be your MP, and you're going to want to build a relationship. Bear this in mind when commenting!
- Consult the social media guide if need be: <http://www.amnesty.org.au/activist/training-module/35076>

Aftermath

Write to your newly elected/re-elected, MP. No matter which party they represent. Congratulate them. Introduce your group, and provide a copy of Amnesty's calls.

Seek a meeting with your new/re-elected MP and/or invite them to an event.

If your MP is re-elected, use the election as a new starting point to engage

Elections come and go, but our campaigns go on.



5 things to remember

- Amnesty is always independent and does not endorse candidates
- If you're campaigning on an issue right now, feel free to continue
- But elections provide other opportunities: attend community forums and ask questions, speak to your candidates when they're out and about
- Take note of your use of social media
- After the election, write to your MP and introduce, or reintroduce, your group and share Amnesty's election platform



Any questions?

- You can find this and other resources here on the [Activist Portal](#).
- When meeting with MPs or candidates tell us how your meeting went [here](#). We aim to build a map of MP engagement experiences around the country.
- Over the next day or two you will receive an online evaluation survey. Please do complete it. Your feedback is important.
- If you are on the phone and we can't 'see' you on our panel please email Tracey.Foley@amnesty.org.au so we can send you the evaluation survey too.
- Thanks for your time, we hope this was informative!