



Activist toolkit, March 2017

Hi everyone,

Welcome to the 2017 Refugee Activist Toolkit!

We're Ashley and Glyn and we're part of the Refugee Advisory Group. We work with Amnesty's refugee campaign team to help bridge the gap between those doing the research and designing the campaign direction, and those who are on the streets campaigning.

We give an activist's perspective to the campaign advisors and pass information back to you, the activists. One of the ways we do this is through the monthly refugee activist webinars, where we share campaign updates and Amnesty's position on global events, and discuss action ideas together.

Any activist can join the webinar – [register for the next one here](#) (scroll down to the Refugee Monthly Activism Hook-ups row).

We hope you find this toolkit useful. There are some great things in here like event ideas, advice for reaching the 'persuadables', campaign updates and tips to make sure you don't burn out.

Good luck with your campaigning!

Ashley and Glyn

P.S. We've also put together a [one-page summary](#) of the 2017 Refugee Campaign strategy to print out for members of your action group.

PPS. Ideas or feedback? We'd love to hear them! Get in touch: activism@amnesty.org.au.



[Looking for flyers, posters, petitions and other refugee resources? Find them on our website: \[www.amnesty.org.au\]\(http://www.amnesty.org.au\)](#)

ABOUT THE 2017 CAMPAIGN

What's been happening?



As populist politicians across the globe continue to promote fear, refugees are bearing the brunt of the attack on human rights. But in Australia, there is hope: the Manus Island detention centre has been declared illegal, the outcome of the Australia-US resettlement deals remains unclear and the public mood is turning. Now is the time to push to close the detention centres and develop a more humane approach to the people seeking help.

Campaign objectives

Amnesty International Australia has a 2020 Vision that outlines a range of goals covering campaigns, movement building and fundraising. The goals for the refugee campaign are below and you can [check out the full 2020 Vision here](#).

When creating these goals Amnesty International Australia considered the amount of people power and resourcing we have, what we can realistically achieve and where we can make the most impact. This means we may not be able to do other things that would also assist refugees because we need to focus on what is achievable for us and where we can get the best human rights impact.

The persuadable goal is the most important for action groups.

2020	Endgame: Refugees and asylum seekers fleeing conflict, crisis, torture or persecution across the globe are able to lead safe and stable lives.				
	Goal 1: Safe and legal routes are open and accessible to people on the move in the Asia Pacific			Goal 2: Asia Pacific countries are working together to provide just and durable solutions for asylum seekers and refugees	
How we'll measure our success	Australian government contributes to regional search and rescue operations	Closure of Australia's offshore immigration detention centres	An end to Australian boat pushbacks	Bipartisan commitment in Australia for regional protection measures	Australia's annual humanitarian intake is a minimum of 30,000 places per year
2017 goals	15% of persuadable voters are shifted towards Amnesty's campaign objectives. (group focus)				
	All asylum seekers and refugees are transferred from Nauru to a safe and appropriate third country, and all those granted refugee status on Nauru have the right to settle in Australia. [IS led] Ferrovial does not extend its current offshore detention centre contract for Nauru (expires Oct 2017) and other service providers do not tender for the vacant contract.	The Australian government and Opposition agree to engage with key South East Asia and Pacific governments on a coordinated, responsibility-sharing approach to strengthen refugee protections for asylum seekers and refugees.			Australia commits to increasing to 30,000 annual humanitarian intake places for timeframe of 1 July 2018 to 30 June 2019 (prioritising UNHCR approved refugees)

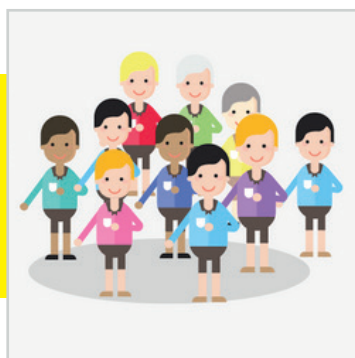
THE PLAN TO WIN

Group focus

Groups can make the most difference by focusing on the persuadables objective. This should form the overarching plan for your group's activities under which responsive work about regional solutions, closing offshore detention and the increase in the refugee resettlement program can fit.

Persuading a critical mass of people to support a better plan will force politicians to act. This won't happen overnight, but if we all put our efforts into this across Australia we can make it a reality. We've got a good shot because this is a sector-wide approach and organisations and activists like you will be working together to shift the balance of public opinion.

1. Identifying and reaching persuadable people in your community



We want a better plan too!



2. Actually persuading them that there is a better and more humane approach to supporting people seeking protection

3. Demonstrating this change to your Member of Parliament (MP)

Everyone wants a better plan!



1. IDENTIFYING AND REACHING PERSUADABLE PEOPLE IN YOUR COMMUNITY



Who are the persuadables?

In campaign theory, you need to inspire your supporters, anger your opponents and persuade the centre group to support you and your ideas.

Thanks to extensive research in partnership with other organisations, we know that the persuadables on refugee issues make up 50-60% of the Australian voting population; our supporters are 20-25%; and our opponents are 15%.

The persuadables are people who are not super-engaged with refugee policy and reluctantly tolerate Minister Dutton and the government's current inhumane approach because they don't know of a better alternative.

These are people in your community that are unlikely to have been to a refugee event before or to be existing Amnesty supporters. Because they make up 50-60% of the population they come from all walks of life. They could be members of your local cricket team, parents and grandparents, neighbours, members of faith groups, local business owners and many other groups. You know your community best and should use your local knowledge to identify the persuadables within your community.

For 2017 we want to reach 15% of the persuadable group, convince them that there is a better way and add their support to this alternative.

How do we reach the persuadables in our community?

Community activities are the bread and butter of Amnesty groups. With a bit of planning, you can make sure your activities are tailored to find the the persuadable people in your community.

Here are some tools to map out your community, reach the right people and set some goals:

- [Audience profiling tool](#) to figure out who's persuadable in your community
- [Planning template](#) to set your goals, strategy and tactics /events

Remember that you can contact your community organiser for some help with running this planning session in your group or for guidance.

Deepening engagement

After someone has attended your event, ask them to sign a [hardcopy petition](#) before leaving or to sign an online petition. This means they can stay engaged with the refugee campaign and we can count them as an Amnesty supporter, which is valuable for when you meet with your MP.

There will be online petitions ('actions') about refugee issues on the website throughout the year. You can also ask people to join your group, volunteer at one of your events or even contact their MP themselves.

WHO ARE THE PERSUADABLES?

This bar represents the Australian voting population

20-25%
SUPPORTERS

These are our best friends.

50-60%
PERSUADABLES

These people can be our friends. Our job is to make that happen.

15%
OPPONENTS

These people will never agree with us so we don't need to engage.

Event tips from Ashley Macmillan, Refugee Advisory Group member

The refugee 'persuadables' refers to Australians who are generally politically inactive, but whose opinions hold a lot of power. They've been given all sorts of names in politics: variously called Pram Pushers, Battlers, and the 'Silent Majority'. We're hoping that this silent majority will become a little less silent on refugees.

When you're hosting events, it's easy to end up with only people who already support you coming along. This isn't bad, but if all our events are like this then we're missing out on a big change opportunity. If local MPs feel that their constituents are becoming unhappy with the status quo in relation to refugees, then those MPs will begin to push for change in government policy. And most MPs represent electorates that are dominated by 'persuadables'.

But how can we get these people to turn up? It always takes more work than getting current supporters to turn up, but it's not impossible.

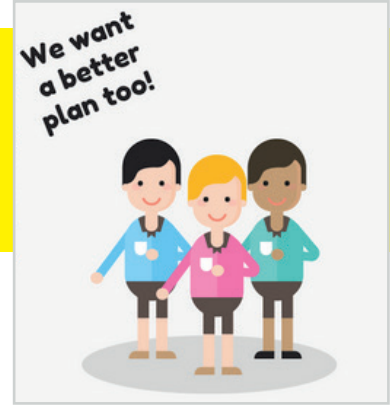
- **Plan carefully and go to the persuadables:** map out who your target audience is, where they are and what they like to do. You'll need to go to the persuadables, not expect them to come to you. This might involve making sure it's hosted in the suburbs, has free parking, is child friendly, near public transport, doesn't go too late and is the type of thing the group you're trying to attract likes (movie night, sports event, cooking class). How about a sports festival with kids' activities, a poetry slam or a concert?
- **Keep it light:** People won't sign up to an event where they're going to be made to feel miserable. Make it entertaining!
- **Focus on values:** Bombarding people with facts is a great way to make them tune out. Instead, try and think about the language you use for your event to make it tap into the values these people have already. For example speak about compassion, social justice, equity and a fair-go. It's less like trying to change their minds, and more like making them realise they already support refugees, because they already value compassion, equity, etc.

Event ideas

- Collect petition signatures on a beach, concert or festival. There are lots of persuadables there, and everyone is relaxed, so more willing to indulge us by signing.
- Dress up when you're collecting signatures or giving out flyers. You'll come across as fun and vibrant, so more people will engage.
- Take the message to your audience by making banners visible from busy roads at peak hour.
- Partner up with local community groups to host events – Country Women's Association, Rotary clubs, Surf Life Saving Clubs, the school's P&C, public libraries, sports clubs.
- Keep your eye on local events (school fetes, local markets) and make an appearance.
- If you're able to, get a well-known musician or comedian to perform at your event. People will come to see them, and will be there to hear your message as well.
- Following on from this – don't be afraid to approach performers. For example, the WA Refugee Group sent the comedian Tom Ballard a Facebook message asking if he'd be happy to meet up for a photo and sign our petition. He did! And promoted us on his Facebook page!
- When advertising events, don't just rely on Facebook. Give out flyers at local cinemas and shopping centres.
- Try and get a local business to promote you eg. display a banner for you or have flyers on their counter. Pick businesses where persuadables are customers.



2. PERSUADING PEOPLE THAT THERE IS A BETTER PLAN



Research shows that these four steps can help us persuade people to join the campaign. Integrate them into all your work, from talking to people to the types of events you hold.

1. **There's a real and serious problem:** the current refugee policy is bad because it is abusive to people who need protection and/or the government is hiding its deliberately abusive policy.
2. **Build empathy and human connection:** humanise people who are seeking safety by telling their stories and sharing the success they've found in their new lives in Australia.
3. **There is a better plan:** presenting another way that is fair, protects people seeking safety and enriches our country.
4. **Everyone has a role to play:** together we can make a change by signing petitions, talking to family and friends, attending events and contacting our politicians. Persuadables need to know that politicians will only change if more everyday Australians speak up and stand up for compassion and a fair-go for people seeking safety.

A better plan for refugees

We need to communicate a tangible, better plan for refugees in order to persuade people to support a different approach. Here are the basics:

- **Boosting Australia's aid program to help neighbouring countries support refugees better.** When people are legally recognised, have safe accommodation, can send their kids to school, and can work and access health services, they won't be forced to make dangerous journeys to Australia.
- **Making sure that the most vulnerable people are resettled, within our region and globally.** We can reduce the pressure on individual countries by working closely with the likes of New Zealand, Japan, the USA, Canada and others to ensure everyone does their bit.
- **Including refugees in our existing visa programs.** In addition to our core resettlement program, let's recognise the skills and qualifications of many refugees by considering them when we allocate student, work and family reunion visas.
- **Assessing refugee applications within a defined time period.** When people know they'll be assessed in an efficient and orderly way, they are less likely to make a dangerous boat journey.
- **Running timely search and rescue operations.** Instead of hazardous boat pushbacks at sea, we can run proper search and rescue operations to save lives.



It's time we stopped letting politicians create havoc with people's lives and get on with a long-term, commonsense plan for the fair treatment of refugees.

TALKING THE TALK

Here are some basic words and phrases to use, based on communications research led by the Asylum Seeker Resource Centre (ASRC) which Amnesty supported.

[Download the refugee campaign communications guide](#) for more detail.

REPLACE	EMBRACE
asylum seeker	People seeking asylum
Australia(ns) should/must/can	We should/must/can
Fix our broken system, tackle the problem	Create a fair and efficient process, fairly examine each (person's) case
Comply with international human rights law, humanitarian and legal obligations	Treat others the way we want to be treated, do the right thing
Physical and sexual abuse, torture, inhumane, shunt people to remote prison camps	Turn back to harm, denied basic rights
Security, survival	Live in peace, care for children, live free from danger, safety
Be settled in Australia, be placed onshore	Integrate into our communities
Fleeing persecution, violence and torture	Seeking safety, rebuilding their lives where it's safe, looking to set up a safe home
It is not illegal to seek asylum, not a security issue, not a threat, no need to fear, myth busting	It is legal to seek asylum, it is an issue of basic rights, foundation of human dignity
Survive, not seeking a better life	Flourish, prosper, thrive
Injustices being perpetrated, harm being inflicted, conditions worsened	Government choosing to detain, [name] decided to deny rights

Sometimes it can be tough dealing with people who think that refugees are jumping the queue etc. We've put together a [short guide on handling objections](#).

Role playing these scenarios in your group can help you figure out the best way to handle questions in your own words. If you'd like more support you can contact your community organiser for Conversation Training.



3. DEMONSTRATING CHANGE TO YOUR MP OR SENATOR

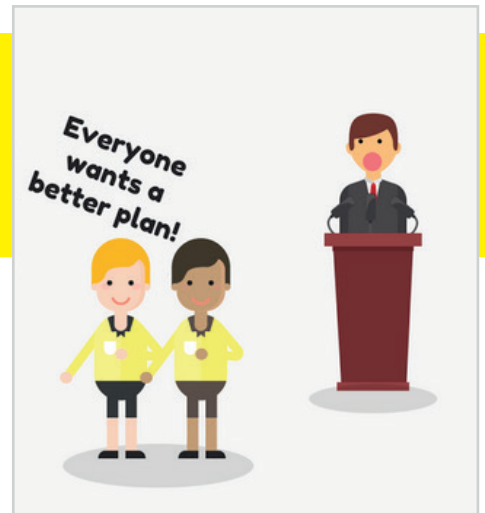
This is the part where you translate all of your activities into cold, hard power. (Please don't take over the world.)

Start to develop a relationship with your MP. Your role is to be a constant reminder to your MP that large parts of the community do not agree with the current approach to people seeking safety, they want a better plan, and your group will remind them of this when it's election time.

MPs are especially attuned to community groups with a lot of support. Taking freshly signed petitions and having large events in your community will be a constant reminder to them that they are accountable and the tide is turning.

Get in touch with your community organiser to find out how many Amnesty supporters live in your MP's electorate. This is a powerful number to have in your back pocket whenever you communicate with your MP.

If you live across a few electorates you can contact your community organiser to find out which MPs you should focus your time on.



Tips from Glyn

Glyn regularly engages with MPs and senators on refugee-related issues.

- When engaging with your MP there are a few things to remember. You are one of their constituents, and whether or not they agree with you they'll care about what you have to say because you're representing the voices of Amnesty supporters across their electorate. You don't need to be an expert with all the details in your head – it's OK to say "I don't know" but that you will get back to them with an answer (but make sure you do). If you get a meeting with one of their advisors don't despair because this is also really useful.
- MPs are people too, so find out what their interests are so you can build some rapport (they might love cats!). It's also worth looking up their maiden speech. It's the opening statement new politicians make when they enter parliament and often reveals a lot about what motivates them and their key areas of interest. You may very well find a hook here for your meetings or calls.
- If you get a meeting with your MP it's good to take someone else with you so they can take notes. This will leave you free to do the talking.



Need more help? You can also check out the [Advocacy Guide](#).

IDEAS FOR DEMONSTRATING COMMUNITY SUPPORT TO YOUR MP

Your action group might already have a strong relationship with your MP or senator or you might be starting out. Wherever you're at we've got ideas for you.

Direct contact with your MP

- Visit your MP
- Email your MP
- Phone your MP
- Send them a letter
- Drop freshly signed petitions into the MPs office on a regular basis (your community organiser can help you get the names to deliver)

You can find details about how to write to, phone or have a meeting with your MP in this comprehensive [Advocacy Guide](#).

We'll also keep this [refugee resources webpage](#) up to date with talking points you can use in your letters, phone calls or meetings with your MP.

Be everywhere

- Go to events your MP is attending and strike up a conversation.
- Saturate the local media with stories about your group, your community activities, and send regular letters to the editor. [Read our media tips here.](#)
- Hold large community events with persuadables within their electorate.
- Invite them to your events if you know you're going to get the numbers.
- Make sure your MP knows a member of your group by name.
- Tweet or Facebook your MP

Happy campaigning!

*Do you have ideas or feedback?
activism@amnesty.org.au*



A final note on self-care...

Many of us have been campaigning on refugees in Australia for years, even decades. While it is critical to keep up the pressure for change it does mean that activists are at high risk of burnout or vicarious trauma. Have a look at this [factsheet on burnout and coping strategies](#).

Amnesty activists have access to a free counselling service. You can book a face-to-face meeting if you're in a city where they have an office, or an on the phone appointment by calling 1300 361 008 or emailing contactus@optum-au.com