

THE GRASSROOTS REPORT

2019 QUARTER 4 (OCT - DEC)



This quarterly report is an overview of Amnesty's national Organising program which is sent to activist leaders and staff. It shows how we're tracking against key goals in the 2020 vision, but it is also a snapshot of some of the most exciting activities and innovations activists have done over the last few months. We want to show key examples of how our grassroots movement has had impact for human rights as a result of their commitment, strategic thinking and hard work.

The purpose of this report is to:

- enable activists to see their individual contribution and understand their collective impact
- show transparency
- share activist led innovation
- identify our areas of strength and where we need to improve

If you have any questions or comments please contact the Organising Team at communityorganising@amnesty.org.au.

Image: Western Australian activists

NATIONAL HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE MOVEMENT MANAGER

2019 was a year of global upheaval and a push back against progressive politics. We have seen a concerted and active effort to undermine human rights and at the same time we have experienced increased restrictions on our rights to actively push back against these trends. Never has our movement been so important.

2019 was also a year of transition for Amnesty International Australia (AIA) in bedding down the new People Powered model. There is no doubt it was difficult for all of us to ride the storm of this transition. I want to thank you for your patience, your loyalty and your passion over this challenging period. Thanks to all of you we start 2020 from a place of strength and determination. A place that will see AIA not just get back on track to fight back against these new worrying trends. But to a place that puts us on the path to being a bigger bolder activist led movement.

2019 was a year that highlighted the importance of people powered movements like ours. It was a year of protest, from Hong Kong and Sudan, to Bolivia and Iran, people across the world took to the streets to share their frustrations and push for change. The school strike 4 climate movement has been an impressive demonstration of the importance of protest. We have stood in solidarity with school strikers awarding them Ambassador of conscience awards and amplifying their calls for action. This year we will launch an exciting new Right to Protest campaign and together we will work to defend the rights of activists like these courageous school strikers to assemble peacefully and push for change.

Our first inaugural activism forum held in October was a huge success. At this forum I witnessed the passion, energy and skill of our movement in all its glory. It was a significant highlight of my year to spend two full days with activist leaders from across the country. The activism forum showcased our activist leadership and helped move forward discussions about who we are and where we need to go. The outcome of which will help shape our next youth strategy and activists consultations for our next vision in March and April this year.

Write for Rights (W4R) is a clear example of the power our movement has to draw attention to global issues and to make real change in the lives of individuals. And 2019's youth focus resonated with communities watching young people lead the way for climate change. 2019 showed the world that young people have their own voice and they will be heard. You all held over 60 events for the courageous young people highlighted in our W4R cases and you collected over 11,000 actions. Yasaman Aryani a young Iranian woman using her voice to draw attention to freedom for women to have autonomy over their own bodies is a powerful case and one that reminds us that there is still huge ground to make up in the fight for gender equality. We will continue to take action for Yasaman this international women's day.

On behalf of the movement team thank you for all that you have done to defend and protect human rights in 2019. We are privileged to stand alongside you in the continued fight for justice in 2020.



Sarah Gooderham
Movement Manager

HIGHLIGHTS FROM REGIONAL PRESIDENTS

Ronnie Gori (ACT / SNSW President)

- The Moruya action group held a very successful Write for Rights event - writing 53 letters.
 - Wagga Wagga action group held their Write for Rights event on December 3rd. A very busy day bringing in a total action count of 210. This can be broken down to 120 petition signatures and a total of 90 letter written in support of our cases. Another Wagga action group highlight was their letter to the editor in support of Raise the Age, published in the Daily Advertiser on October 15th.
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Glyn Mather (NSW President)

- After many upheavals in 2019, we were able to re-establish our NSW Activism Leadership Committee (ALC) at the end of the year. Our new committee combines the passion, skills and expertise of Belinda Neal (long-time member), Mairead Halpin (originally from QLD/NNSW region and now with NSW LGBTQI Network), Heather Drew (Mudgee group), Swagota Kotoky (AI Canada, India and now Hornsby group), Kevin Sweeney (Newcastle group) and myself (NSW Refugee Network and 4 years with the NSW ALC / Branch Committee).
- Manly group was a standout - with a stall and their usual Write for Rights dinner, they wrote 206 letters, 71 messages of support, and signed 388 petitions. In total 665 actions!
- Mudgee earned themselves some media coverage - congratulations to them! They organised a Write for Rights stall at the markets on the weekend and held regular letter writing activities on Wednesdays and Fridays, at the library. In addition the group made its first approach to the local high school where 230 W4R letters were written. In total they achieved well over 200 signatures and nearly 70 letters to put pressure on governments to respect the rights of ten courageous young people
- Maitland / Morpeth Action Group: A self sufficient action group who continue to work hard and achieve incredible outcomes. The team gathered 360 actions for W4Rs.
- Central Coast group and a local partner, the Community Environment Network, hosted two events for Write for Rights. One of these has been an annual event for the last 3 years, a High School Writing Competition. It builds networks with schools in the community as well as attracting new supporters to the group. This year's topic was - "Human Rights in an Age of Climate Change - So What's the Action Plan"?
- In addition to the regular Write for rights events supporting people at risk, the Hornsby group organised a storytelling event for kids during the July 2019 school holidays. One of our regular members read two stories teaching inclusiveness - 'Winning the World Cup' and 'The invisible Boy' - to a rapt audience. Some of the older kids wrote messages in support of the Children out of Watch Houses campaign, written on kites they made.
- The Newcastle group had a very successful W4R campaign, gathering 659 letters and petitions so far, with more to come in Q1 2020. The Newcastle group has also been busy planning a major human rights and social justice event to be run in Newcastle over three days from Sep 11 to 13, 2020. This will include a human rights conference, skills workshops, schools program, music concerts, art exhibitions, a street festival, poetry and film events.
- The NSW LGBTQI Network and Newtown group joined forces to talk to as many people as possible at the Newtown Festival in November. They spoke about LGBTQI rights and campaigned for a Human Rights Act as well as promoting Write for Rights. All up they collected 292 actions. Over the same weekend the NSW LGBTQI Network also participated in the Parramatta Pride Picnic, where they spoke to members of the community about LGBTQI rights and collected signatures.

HIGHLIGHTS FROM REGIONAL PRESIDENTS

Maddie Wood (QLD / NNSW President)

- Gold Coast group meet monthly to hold their meeting and host letter writing where W4R and Urgent Actions are performed. The group represented Amnesty International in the annual Walk Together event. Our banner boldly stood out among the 300-400 attendees and demonstrated Amnesty support of diversity and the need to be a welcoming society. On December 8th and 10th the GC group also held two market stalls in Surfers Paradise to raise awareness and collect petition signatures for CIE and gather actions for W4Rs.
 - Sunshine Coast group partnered with Nambour Community Centre's multicultural program, Sista4sista, for a photographic exhibition sharing stories of both projects for a successful Art Exhibition – Sum of Us.
 - Qld LGBTQI Network have been busy bees. Their main event was hosting a stall at Brisbane Pride, collecting 600 signatures for a Human Rights Act and Justice for Zak. Other activities included: stall at Trans Fair Day where our activist Angelo made a great connection with MP Teri Butler that resulted in a potential private members bill for the Justice for Zak campaign.
 - Chermside group have been working on Write for Rights 2019/20. The group held a letter-writing event at Mu'ooz Eritrean restaurant in West End, Brisbane with 11 attendees from Chermside, Ashgrove and Brisbane groups and 2 additional attendees. Forty letters for the cases and collected 81 petition signatures! It was a great way to catch up with activists while enjoying delicious food and supporting employment of refugees at the restaurant. A representative of the Eritrean Community Association also attended. The group learned about human rights issues affecting people from Eritrea and how we could work together in the future.
 - We would like to give a shout out to Bryce Alcock, one of our long standing and very dedicated members who retired at the end of 2019. A big thank you for all his awesome years of service, he'll be missed! He's been a member of AIA for over 30 years and convenor of the Toowoomba group since 2014
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Nicole Wedding (SA / NT President)

- Darwin action group held a number of market stalls gathering petition signatures for Write for Rights cases. To encourage new people along, an email was sent out to Amnesty action takers within the region. This proved successful with Amnesty supporters connected to the action group for the first time
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Greg Luckman (TAS President)

- In Tasmania there was a series of seminars and workshops in support of the "16 days of action," the campaign to end gender based violence. These successful events saw a keynote address by speaker Jess Hill.
- There was a screening of Adam Goodes "The Final Quarter in Cygnet." An incredible event hosted by the ALC. Zainab Clark, group convener and ALC member said they couldn't have done it without the drive and support of Rodney Dillion. There were 60 people in attendance with post film discussion lasting until 10:00pm. Highlights included speeches by the Mayor and deputy Mayor, surprise guests in Jo Cameron, son Cory, daughter and grandson of Dr. Patsy Cameron AO - who joined the panel discussion.

HIGHLIGHTS FROM REGIONAL PRESIDENTS

Katrina North (VIC President)

Sometimes a letter can change someone's life. That's the premise of Write for rights Amnesty's annual letter-writing campaign and the world's biggest human rights event. All of the cases this year featured young people from around the world. On Sunday the 15th of December we held the second annual Write for rights Marathon at the Melbourne Multicultural Hub. The Drill Hall was buzzing with activity and activism with 10 tables of letters and petitions for our participants to sign. We had activists go out into the streets to get actions signed as well. We also had a photographer from our Photography Network to capture all of the wonderful activism.

To add to the day we had a fantastic lineup of speakers and guests. Starting with Simon Lewis an international humanitarian lifeguard and volunteer surf lifesaver. Once the former St Kilda Lifesaving Club Captain, he is now the only Australian lifeguard to have worked both major migration routes in Europe. He continues to go back to Greece helping save people seeking asylum in boats. Next was young Uyghur activist Nuria Khasim Yu who spoke about her family living in China and the problems they face as Uyghur people. At the end of the day we had a panel discussion on the future of human rights with youth activists from the Centre for Multicultural Youth, School Strike 4 Climate, Seed, and Amnesty International.

All of this was made possible by one of our fabulous activists MJ Hilhorst. She took on this event with help from the Victorian ALC and other volunteers and has made it a highlight of our AIA calendar. The day was very successful with over 500 actions. Most of the people I spoke to had never been to an AI event before, there were so many conversations and deep engagement.

Leonie Alexander (WA President)

Amnesty International WA relaunched the Beats for Bravery human rights festival in December 2019. Beats for Bravery is a celebration of brave human rights defenders around the world. Whilst talented local musicians perform, a silent auction was underway featuring work generously donated by local artists. Thanks to the passion and enthusiasm of all artists, musicians and volunteers, over 200 actions were collected in support of human rights activities all over the world, and over \$3200 was raised to support vital human rights research.

The fundamental human rights of all people are enshrined within the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. However, cases of people being abused, imprisoned and killed for speaking out against injustice occur every day. Too often, it is youth who are the worst affected by this injustice. Last year, Amnesty International focused on protecting the rights of these brave young people. Beats for Bravery provided an opportunity for the Fremantle community to take action. "As a member of the Freo community, I have seen how we come together to stand up for what is right" says Emily Watson, Amnesty WA Community Organising Volunteer. "Human rights are important to our community and Beats for Bravery is a great opportunity to remind ourselves that not everyone is as fortunate as we are in their fight for equality".

Fremantle Mayor, Brad Pettitt, has always been a supporter of Amnesty, and welcomed guests at our event last year. We were honoured to have Bella Burgemeister, a WA high school student and one of the key organisers of the WA 'School Strike 4 Climate' actions, as our guest speaker at Beats for Bravery. Bella spoke about her passion for the environment and shared experiences as a youth activist. The star-studded lineup Angie Colman, Bass Lemon, Mt. Cleverest, Simone & Girlfunkle and Airline Food. Amazing artwork was donated by David Spencer, Ayad Alqaraghooli, Zal Kanga-Parabia, Joanna Brown, Peter Barker and Jana Vodesil-Baruffi. [Here](#) is some footage of our amazing event last year :-)

PHOTO HIGHLIGHTS



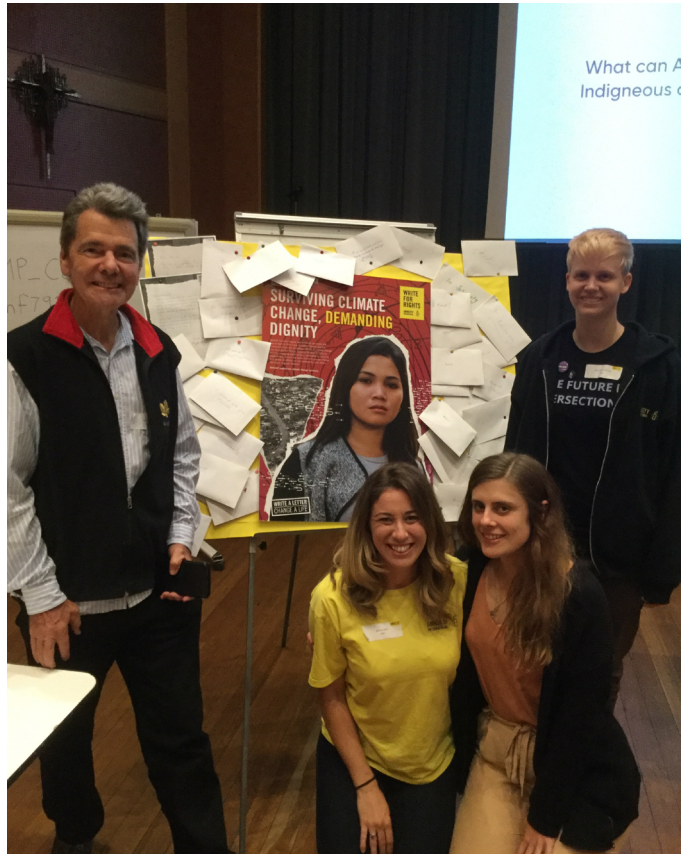
Margherita accepting award on behalf of AIA



Tasmanian activists hosting screening of Adam Goodes' "The Final Quarter" in Cygnet (above / below)



NSW Rainbow network hitting the local festivals



QLD activists taking action at Activism Forum

PHOTO HIGHLIGHTS



WA activists handing over CIE petitions to state government

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

EXPERTS BACK AGE CHANGE

Claims that Wagga will be over-run by juvenile delinquents is just fear mongering. The call to raise the age of criminal responsibility (DA, October 15) is based on brain science and on the opinion of the experts.

The Law Council of Australia has backed the move, saying if all jurisdictions followed suit it would vastly improve the lot of some of the nation's most vulnerable children, especially Indigenous children. Arthur Moses, President of the Law Council of Australia, says that "the incarceration of children as young as 10 is a national tragedy. There is something wrong when children can't join Facebook until 13 but in Australia can be prosecuted for a criminal offence at 10."

A coalition of Indigenous and human rights organisations has been calling for the change. Amnesty International Indigenous rights advocate Joel Clark said research showed children who went to jail before they turned 14 were three times more likely to offend as an adult. Raising the minimum age of criminal responsibility to 14 would improve justice outcomes for some of our most vulnerable children and honour Australia's commitments under international law,

including to promote the best interest of the child. Many children in detention not been sentenced. There must be greater emphasis on evidence-based alternatives to detention, including intensive rehabilitative and welfare-based responses, justice re-investment projects, early intervention prevention and community-led programs
Patricia Burgess, Wagga

DON'T BLAME US FOR BIG

I live in the country. I enjoy the peace and tranquility of country life. The cattle and sheep grazing, the beautiful clear skies showing the most amazing uninterrupted sunsets. Then there's the unspoken joy of having acres of your own land to do what you like. Yet reading the commentary on drought in metropolitan papers, I was left to think the current drought we face is caused by ourselves. But when I stop to look at our cities, how could anything be further from the truth. Horizon to horizon chimney stacks emit smoke, cars, trucks, buses bus around aimlessly, and at night many lights are on, you can't see a star.

I would just hope before city people blame country people for climate change

Wagga Wagga action group's letter to the editor published



Write for Rights letter writing marathon in Melbourne

What we are trying to achieve:

Amnesty organises a broad range of individuals across the country to be human rights activists in their community. These activists grow our movement and influence decision makers by taking our campaigns to the streets. They ensure that more Australians know about the human rights abuses going on through community events, engaging with the media and meeting with MPs. But the more unstoppable our movement is the more impact we have, which is why we have the following goals from the 2020 Vision.

2020 Vision goals

Increase membership to 10,000

Increase activist base to 200 core, 500 committed and 1,300 engaged level activists.

Raise \$25,000 through our grassroots movement

Collect 800,000 online actions and 30,000 offline actions per year.

What are all these things?

Members are Amnesty supporters that pay an annual fee to have a larger say in our movement. They are able to vote for or become leaders through our governance process. If you would like to become a member or find out more please go to <https://action.amnesty.org.au/membership>.

Activists are Amnesty supporters that work on our campaigns at a deeper level. They raise awareness and encourage others to take action. Depending on how involved they are or how deep their engagement they sit at a different level. Core activists are our leaders who define the work we do. Committed activists are long term activists that may or may not have higher responsibilities. Engaged activists are new to the movement.

An offline action is when someone gives their details to take action. Most of them come from hardcopy petitions.



Bay & Basin action group taking action for Write 4 Rights

Q4 data	QLD / NNSW	NSW	ACT / SNSW	VIC	TAS	SA / NT	WA	National	2019 Q3
No. of groups (total)	22	33	10	25	4	13	12	119	-
New groups	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Groups becoming inactive	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
No. of activists (total)	61	116	33	54	26	40	32	362	-
- <i>Engaged level</i>	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
- <i>Committed level</i>	40	94	23	39	17	26	12	251	-
- <i>Core level</i>	21	22	10	15	9	14	20	111	-
No. of members (total)	674	1,589	394	1,514	200	458	404	5,292	-
No. of events (total)	19	28	8	25	5	17	11	113	-
- <i>October events</i>	5	4	3	8	-	6	3	29	-
- <i>November events</i>	9	13	2	11	5	7	5	52	-
- <i>December events</i>	5	11	3	6	-	4	3	32	-
No. of offline actions (total)	2,225	5,037	516	3,085	678	2,044	1,114	15,975	-
- <i>With contact details</i>	1,928	3,165	368	1,682	457	1,718	481	10,585	-
- <i>Without contact details</i>	327	1,886	148	1,403	221	316	633	5,394	-
- <i>% of actions with data</i>	85.50%	62.84%	71.32%	54.52%	67.40%	84.05%	43.18%	66.26%	-

Key takeaways:

Each quarter it's important that we review who makes up our movement. Amnesty organises a broad range of individuals across the country to be human rights activists in their community. These activists grow our movement and influence decision makers by taking our campaigns to the streets. They ensure that more Australians know about the human rights abuses going on through community events, engaging with the media and meeting with MPs. The larger and more active unstoppable our movement is the more impact we have.

On January 24th the Organising team sent group registration emails out to all our group conveners to help update our data. As you can see we need our movement's help to make sure our data is accurate. If there are events happening out there that we're unaware of then we can't measure our full impact in an accurate way. If you're not sure where to lodge events go to <https://www.amnesty.org.au/host-an-event-2/>. We'll also soon be launching a new events form to streamline the process better.

Since we are relaunching the Grassroots report we decided to focus on Write for Rights in Q4. Future reports will have a wider range of information about all of our activities. But, here are some highlights and learnings from Write for Rights in 2019.

Last quarter activists held 46 events nationally for our annual Write for Rights campaign. In addition, at our latest count nationally we collected over 11,230 actions for the campaign. With actions still being sent to action centres. With Write for Rights still going, this already beats the national target of 9,000 offline actions. Please note that 1,059 actions have no home - we would love to highlight your work, so please remember to label your actions once you have collected them.

We mobilised 40 brand new activists across the country to collect actions at the U2 concerts. This was the first time that a national mobilisation event of this scale was completely activist led and ran, with ALC and other activist leaders in each region mentoring the brand new activists. The activist led events gathered 500 actions nationally with Bono giving Amnesty a shout out on stage at the Sydney concert. A great way to bring new people to our movement with something fun and engaging to be involved with.

For the campaign we also tried a few experiments to see if we could encourage a broad range of Amnesty supporters to collect actions. We put together a toolkit aimed individuals who had taken action for Write for Rights last year. Inviting them to host their own meetup in a friendly environment with people they know. Over 200 people signed up initially to host one of these meetups, but we're still sorting through the results to see how successful it was. What it taught us though is that we can come up with asks for the broader movement to collect actions or be an activist outside the action group structure and there is an interest in it.

We also invited aged care facilities to participate in Write for Rights. Five homes were very enthusiastic about the campaign, and registered to host Write for Rights letter writing lunches with their residents.

Given the difficult year we had in 2019 we're so proud of what our movement was able to achieve in Q4.

Conclusion and key dates:

Key Dates for Q2, 2020 - <https://www.amnesty.org.au/activism-planner/>

February - Group calling program to activist leaders in the movement

February - Launch of fundamental activist skills training modules online

29 February - Group registrations due date

8 March - International Women's Day

10 April - Handover of Yasaman Aryani's petitions to Iranian Embassy

April - Vision and Diversity Roadshows in every action centre to consult on our Diversity, Inclusion and Wellbeing Strategy as well as our next AI Australia Vision

Check regularly for events in your region at <https://www.amnesty.org.au/events/>

If your group does something in Q1 that you think should be highlighted in the next report make sure to let our Community Organisers know by emailing communityorganising@amnesty.org.au.

Thanks for reading! We'll be back again after Q1 to show more about our organising program. If you have any feedback, comments or questions about this report please feel free to get in touch



Manly action group collecting actions for Write 4 Rights