

THE GRASSROOTS REPORT

2020 QUARTER 2 (April - June)



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: Human Rights Observers at Perth Black Lives Matter

National Highlights from our Movement Manager- Sarah Gooderham

What an unusual time it has been. COVID19 has highlighted that despite our differences we are incredibly interconnected and each of us has a vital role to play in protecting one another.

The harrowing murder of George Floyd sent shockwaves throughout the world and was felt deeply by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders here in our country who have experienced injustice against people of colour for centuries. When Black Lives Matter rallies were announced we changed internal COVID19 policies to make sure we could stand in solidarity with these communities. I stood beside colleagues and activists leaders in Perth as a Human Rights Observer, independently monitoring police and protester behaviour. We also deployed Human Rights Observers in Sydney during this time. What an important role we can play as Amnesty to impartially protect the right to protest. We will continue to expand the Human Rights Observers program over the coming months as part of our campaign to protect this fundamental human right.

COVID19 continues to alter how we can conduct our activism and protect human rights. It's been inspiring to witness the movement adapting their activism and embracing new technology to take our activism online. In spite of physical disconnection we have seen greater connection and communication between activists and groups online including through a new trial program called Digital Defenders to skill up and connect people who inject human rights messages into online conversations. In addition, I've enjoyed seeing the [National Activist facebook group](#) grow in number and variety of conversations. As staff we are also working to expand activist access and training to our database as well as to our staff communication platform, Slack.

As we've moved online, it's been important to identify opportunities to partner across the movement. I've seen both staff and activists reaching out across the sector to combine our forces. We are stronger as a movement if we are working with like minded organisations and uniting our voices. This has included film screenings of In My Blood It Runs, Palm Sunday or Refugee Week online rallies, a highly successful webinar that the Redfern group ran to mark the anniversary of the Intervention and a Truth Telling event that our Impact team led.

This last quarter we also welcomed new and returning members to our Activism Leadership Committees. They are vital avenues of support for action groups and activists across the country. We ran a national webinar to skill up and connect these lead activists and the entire Movement team is looking forward to working alongside them to continue to grow, develop and mobilise our movement.

The clarion call has been that we need to build back better. We refuse to return to life as it was; this is an opportunity to address the fundamental injustices and inequalities in our system and to ensure that this is truly a turning point for society. I'm inspired by the courage, persistence, creativity and resilience of our activists in challenging injustice and fighting for the world we want to see - a world that protects and promotes human rights.



Sarah Gooderham
Movement Manager

Regional Highlights:

**Kevin Sweeney (NSW President
nswpresident@amnesty.org.au)**



Quarter 2 has been dominated by the Covid-19 restrictions and the cancellation of many face to face activist events.

NSW groups and networks have responded by directing effort into on-line petition signing, letter writing and emails, and initiating on-line events. On-line events included a Palm Sunday Rally (Newcastle Group with HASA); online forums to discuss films including: “2040” (Eastern Suburbs Group), “In My Blood it Runs” (Mudgee Group), and “When the River Runs Dry” (Redfern Group); Refugee Week “Opposite Sides of the Fence” interview with refugee Zaki Haidari and author Z T Quin (Newcastle Group with HASA); and “World Refugee Day Forum” (Newcastle Group with ARAN). Face to face events included a Youth Activism Forum (NSW Schools Network) and a well-attended event “13 Years of the Failed Intervention” which was also broadcast on ABC radio (Redfern Group).

We also spent time progressing collaborations with the Australian Refugee Action Network, Hunter Community Alliance and other partners, quietly celebrating Amnesty’s 59th Birthday on May 28, and attending innumerable Zoom webinars!

**Maddie Wood (QLD/NNSW President
qldnswpresident@amnesty.org.au)**

COVID has not slowed our region down with all groups putting in awesome effort to activate during these unusual times.

Amnesty Gold Coast hosted their first ever webinar to celebrate Amnesty’s 59th Birthday and commemorate National Sorry Day. Engaging guest speakers Peter Hanley, Mario Santos and Rodney Dillion joined 20+ activists online to share stories of their Amnesty experiences, the Stolen Generation and Amnesty’s CIE campaign.

The QLD/NNSW ALC hosts a Bimonthly National Activist Catch Up that allows us all to connect, share our Amnesty experiences, and learn from each other in addition to reviewing AI updates.

In May, Lara and Keerthi, convenors of the JCU Amnesty group, led the first ever Amnesty Youth Activist Forum. The regional forum was a great success in brainstorming ideas on how youth can engage with activism and learn about world issues while connecting with fellow youth activists.

Stitch & Resist – our Sunshine Coast group got creative and hosted an online craftivism event that engaged the group members to connect during COVID-19 whilst taking action for the Raise the Age campaign.

The Chermside / Brisbane City group has been seeing record numbers attend their monthly online meetings, and have been busy at work on urgent actions, and supporting the Kangaroo Point Hotel Protest.

Toowoomba has been busy in the community focusing on MP and Elder Engagement for CIE. In addition the group have been showing their support to Indigenous Rangers by meeting with election candidates to gather support for the Indigenous lead land management solution, traditional fire burning. Exciting developments!

The Townsville group celebrated their tenth year of lighting the dark. The group has been hosting First Friday Vigils for Refugees and People Seeking Asylum since June 2010! Below shows the group at their Refugee Week Breakfast held in honor of recognizing a wonderful contribution to the successful settlement of refugees in North Queensland.

Regional Highlights:

Leonie Alexanders (WA ALC President wapresident@amnesty.org.au)

WA activists confronted the challenge of covid-19 by coming together and committing to supporting those who were most impacted by the pandemic -our rights holders. Refugee Rights activists and the Fremantle Group supported online actions for asylum seekers in hotel detention and provided tangible support through the CARRAD Pantry Collection Project, working with partners and MPs Josh Wilson and Simone McGurk to collect food and essentials for vulnerable refugees and asylum seekers living in the community.

The Indigenous Rights Group collaborated with Social Reinvestment WA and contributed to major reform in the Fines Default Legislation, ensuring that no person will be imprisoned for being unable to pay their fines. This was a long-awaited reform that was urgently needed to address systemic racism and inequality and is a significant and tangible step for Indigenous Rights in WA, as the fine default system disproportionately impacted women and Aboriginal people. It led to the tragic death of Miss Dhu, who died in a South Hedland police cell following arrest and detention for unpaid fines. Caitlin Smith, one of our Indigenous Rights Leaders was there on the steps of the WA Parliament for the photo op with SRWA members, partner organisations, and supportive MPs.

The WA Schools Network has reformed and is being led by Tara Boyen, who has in the space of a few months produced human rights educational resources and materials for students and teachers, as well as visiting schools and sharing Amnesty's work. And finally, newly trained Human Rights Observers supported the #blacklivesmatter rally in Perth, attended by 15, 000 people, and filmed and recorded police interactions with protesters. Their presence along with other legal observers sent a strong message on the right to protest.

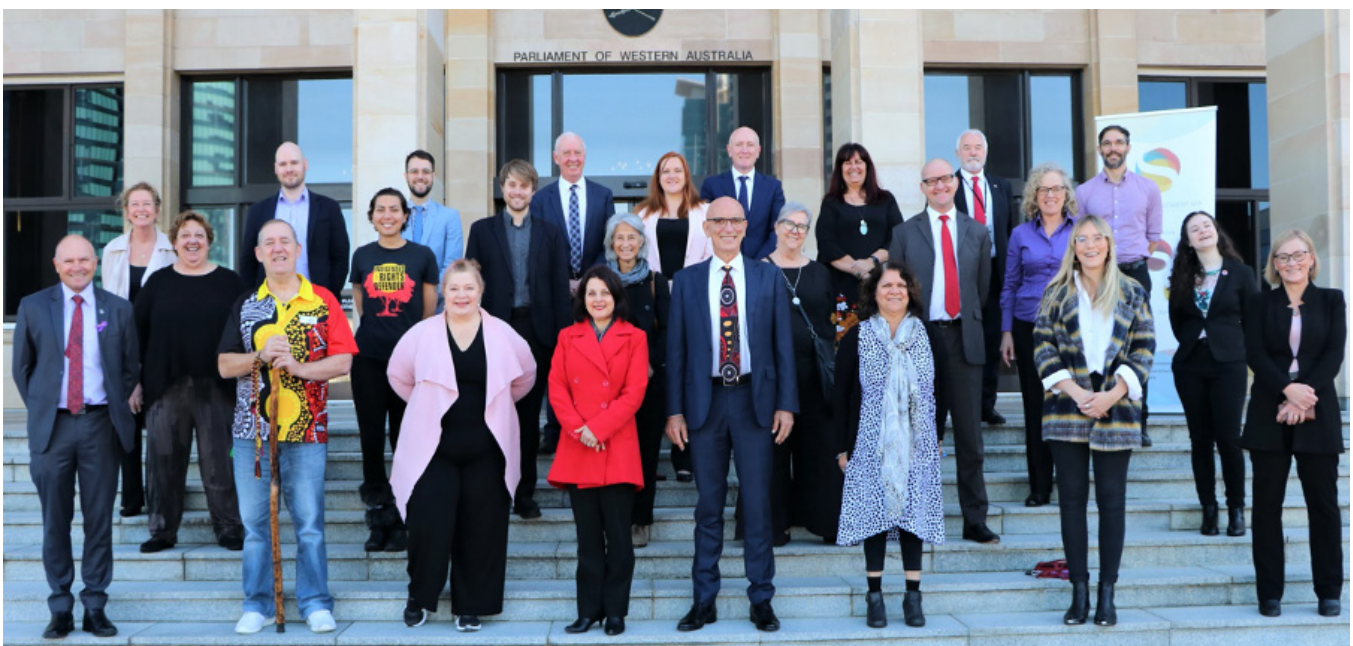


Image: Social Reinvestment Western Australia outside the WA Parliament

Activist Highlights

Black Lives Matter Rallies

The murder of George Floyd by then police officer Derek Chauvin in Minneapolis on May 25 has resonated around the world through the groundswell built over recent years through #BlackLivesMatter and has created a new moment to focus on police violence and broader issues of racial injustice.



Image: Black-Lives-Matter-Sydney-Getty-06-2020

AI Australia has taken a three tiered approach: international, national and local, seeking to amplify key human rights concerns/accountabilities and solidify AIA's approach to tackling racism and support partner organisations and rights holders to amplify their voices. The media narrative switched here in Australia, talking about Indigenous deaths in custody. AIA had 130 pieces of media coverage with a potential reach of 13.4 million. Around the country we saw protesters come out in the thousands in support of BLM and the ongoing fight for justice for Indigenous Australia. We deployed Human Rights observers at the Perth, Brisbane and Sydney protests and are currently expanding this project.

“Thank you. Thank you for being deadly! Thank you standing there in solidarity. Thank you for sharing your stories of pain and hurt and injustice. Thank you for speaking openly about those things we learn not to speak of in the wider community. Thank you for standing beside my mob and demanding a change. Thank you for not accepting the way things are and demanding a new way of living together. Thank you everyone who took a stand - Black, White, and all people of colour. Thank you for giving me hope for a better future for my mob! I saw us all together standing as one people and I knew times are changing and we are powerful TOGETHER!”

Activist Highlights

Youth In Our Movement: yag@amnesty.org.au.

The past quarter has been an exciting time for the Youth Advisory Group (YAG) - as it was the beginning of the new 2020-23 National Youth Strategy and saw a shift into online campaigning. The period, therefore, firstly saw focus on YAG integrating into the wider Amnesty movement, working with existing youth groups, ALCs and staff teams to share the delivery of the youth strategy. Further, many projects to implement the youth strategy entered planning phases - look forward to their official releases in Q3! Two key examples of this is the creation of a youth activism journey and an interim schools process. Firstly, by working with the Get Actives Team, YAG has now started to highlight the presence of youth pathways in Amnesty for new u25 volunteers by attending get actives. Secondly, as a part of making our schools outreach programs more sustainable and interactive, a national interim process was made. The process was made to ensure that all school requests are met, and will be in place until a finalised national schools process is made, in consultation with school groups, ALCs and the wider movement.



Image: Youth Advisory Group meeting in the Melbourne office

OTHER HIGHLIGHTS

Virtual Progress: Christian Foyne (ACT/SNSW ALC Member)

Virtual Progress was a national conference for changemakers held on 23-24 June by Australian Progress. We funded 10 activists across the country as well as a handful of staff to attend. This conference set the tone for a robust interactive platform that will enhance best practice in the pursuit of social justice. Ranging from topical issues like disability justice, decarceration and race relations, the experience from this event was deeply enriching and empowering. My biggest lesson was the need to explore community led approaches in addressing issues like Indigenous incarceration and the critical need to work with people with lived experiences, on the rights we advocate for. Building alliances for change requires a contextual understanding of the unique experiences of right holders/victims as a premise to design effective intervention programs.



COVID19 Pivot and Activist Projects

Shortly following lockdown Organising staff coordinated a national webinar to discuss human rights issues arising due to Covid-19. Three key project groups were identified and established: Surveillance, Discrimination and Detention. As part of these groups activists met regularly with Organisers to shape our response to these emerging issues.

The Discrimination Project is working in partnership with the Refugee Council of Australia on a the NoChildLeftBehind campaign, and launching a series of digital stickers for supporters to use on their social media to promote the campaign.

A key outcome of this work was that the Detention project was able to transition into an ongoing Indigenous Rights focused leaders group made up of several activists from Mudgee, Dubbo, Redfern, Adelaide Hills, Perth and now Darwin!

“I like what you’re doing now. The support we’ve received is very professional. Also, like the current surveillance and discrimination campaigns that are being developed. You’re really thinking about the range of activists and what they have capacity and interest to be involved in. It’s also very helpful to help the movement team as a conduit for communication with other teams.”

Anonymous feedback from an activist regarding staff support throughout COVID19

OTHER HIGHLIGHTS

Covid Pivot

What We did

We integrated the response across the organisation and were able to highlight long term campaign areas such as kids and refugees in detention. Important partnerships were formed through Democracy In Colour and the Health Firewall Campaign and a coalition to act as a watchdog on surveillance and police overreach.

What were our learnings?

We found that Australian based cases and campaigns performed well during this pivot, with international cases not performing as well. We need to have more online activism options available to ensure we are empowering our supporter base to remain active. Through this pivot we are also developing more ways for activists to be involved from the beginning of our campaigns, utilising the breadth of knowledge and experience that our activists base provides our movement.

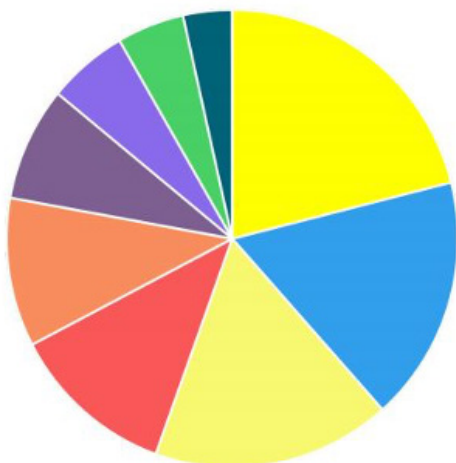
Instant Insights | Amnesty

Compiled for Amnesty International on 23 April 2020



Share of Voice Total volume of coverage for Amnesty benchmarked against OXFAM, UNICEF, Human Rights Watch, Human Rights Law Centre, Greenpeace, GetUp!, Asylum Seeker Resource C, Refugee Council of Australia, Australia for UNHCR

24 March 2020 to 23 April 2020



- Amnesty: 1211 [21.05%]
- OXFAM: 999 [17.37%]
- UNICEF: 983 [17.09%]
- Human Rights Watch: 681 [11.84%]
- Human Rights Law Centre: 605 [10.52%]
- Greenpeace: 464 [8.07%]
- GetUp!: 330 [5.74%]
- Asylum Seeker Resource C: 277 [4.82%]
- Refugee Council of Australia: 201 [3.49%]
- Australia for UNHCR: 1 [0.02%]

Membership/ Governance:

Over the past quarter membership updated it's renewal communications to acknowledge the effect of Covid. It was also a very busy period of communicating with members leading up to the Annual General Meeting (AGM) planned for 18 July. The Board subsequently made the decision to postpone the AGM to later this year, so as to address some concerns around process and provide members with the most positive experience when they engage with our governance. We did try to address those concerns within the current timeframe leading into the AGM, but came to the conclusion that it was not possible. Our main work in Membership currently is:

to finalise methods of capturing more important data on our members in order to inform us of age and diversity of memberships. We also need to do this so we can take the next step in welcoming 16 and 17 year old members.

Through staff and activist consultation we are continuing to design a new membership product/ package that will reinvigorate membership numbers and participation in the organisation.

As well as the Membership Product Project which incorporates the design of the product as mentioned in the previous point, we have identified 3 other projects specifically for membership, focused on increasing our membership diversity, growth and engagement.

Vision Goals

For each human rights issue we work on we create campaign plans around what we want to achieve and how we will create change. Similarly we need to have goals and strategies around how we are going to grow, deepen and improve our movement and its activism so that no matter what the issue, we are powerful and ready to act. The following goals for 2020 show what we want to achieve this year:

- Double our membership to 10,000 AIA members - including encouraging our existing activists to become members
- Grow our activist base: 1,300 Engaged Activists, 500 Committed Activists and 200 Core Activists
- Raise \$25,000 with our movement
- Collect 800,000 signatures online and support our movement to collect 30,000 offline signatures

Coming up this quarter, from August, we will start consulting with our members, activists, donors and partners to shape the next AIA Vision.

Quarter 3 Data: July - September 2020

Data - Who Makes Up Our Movement

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 and unstoppable our movement is the more impact we have.

	Action Groups	Activists			Members
		Core	Committed	Engaged	
ACT/SNSW	9	8	21	59	392
NSW	30	27	112	303	1622
QLD/NNSW	18	24	52	52	672
SA/NT	11	17	24	28	458
TAS	4	10	18	16	200
VIC	23	23	65	58	1526
WA	12	23	20	28	418
National	11	-	26	53	60
Total Q2	118	132	338	597	5348
Total Q1	107	125	313	541	5216

Together between April and June 2020 our activists held :

Hundreds of activists came together in the online space over the last few months as we all attempted to navigate activism whilst in lock down or within the constraints of safe physical distancing. We might have been physically distant but we held strong to our desire to stay socially connected online. We ran over 50 webinars via zoom. These online sessions achieved a range of different outcomes including:

- Practical skills-building (including media, MP engagement training as well as a session on “How to use Zoom”
- Campaign discussion and strategy development e.g. those activists involved in the COVID19 projects (Surveillance, Discrimination and Detention)
- Activism project collaborations (e.g. Human Rights Education) : A group of activist leaders came together to work on our “History of Activism” Human Rights Education Project. The team created an eight-week series of fun, engaging and interactive educational content for individuals and families to learn about human rights from home. [Check it out here.](#)
- Simply effective and impressive events like Townsville Amnesty’s Palm Sunday online rally or Redfern Amnesty’s Intervention commemoration. Amnesty Townsville adapted quickly to Covid restrictions, and moved their planned Palm Sunday rally to an online webinar which attracted over 50 attendees. The rally was insightful and engaging, and had guest speakers from across the country including AIA Refugee Advisor Dr Graham Thom, Refugee Council of Australia CEO Paul Power and Angela Fredericks from the Biloela community. There was also a report from Shamindan, who had been detained on Manus for six years and is now living in detention in Port Moresby

We’re also aware of a range of other Zoom sessions including group meetings, film screenings and book club conversations but we haven’t been able to capture the full numbers this quarter. We are in the process of planning out our next three months of online engagement opportunities taking into account our learnings from the past three months. If you ran or were part of an online experience and would like to share what you got out of it, what you’d like more of, and how we can improve on our online provision, we would love to hear from you!

Key takeaways:

Going well / On track

- Our activist numbers and action groups are growing even through a global pandemic - we have two new groups Toohey Forest Amnesty group and Alpine Action Group which organically grew during this time.
- Our national Youth Advisory Group is impressively strong and this quarter recruited 3 new members, started developing our Youth activist journey and new national schools process
- We have been working in partnership with other organisations and this is an area we hope to continue into the future.
- We are continuing to roll out new training modules and are on track in recruiting a team of trainers to help deliver these skills.
- Trialing and learning from online engagement methods including initiatives like Digital Defenders, Human Rights Education platform and how to onboard new activists through our Get Active events.
- Staff and activists are increasingly working internationally with other sections e.g. on sharing our training modules and Fin Spalding representing YAG at a Global Youth Strategy Lab

Areas to improve

- As always we want to enable stronger connections between activists across regions and the country. The National Activist Facebook group is one platform to assist this but we will explore more.
- Another key way to strengthen connections is for the Organising team to work more closely with our Activism Leadership Committee representatives. As such, we are planning a call program to develop deeper relationships and commitment with these lead activists across our regions.
- In order for our Activism Leadership Committees, action groups and activists to be impactful they have to be connected to the latest information about campaigns. We will work in the next quarter to improve communications between activists and our Impact team.
- Consultation with activists and people with lived experience has to be at the heart of our campaigns and projects.
- We need to review our Vision goals particularly around funds raised and actions taken, in light of COVID19 impacts.

Keep connected

Keep connected with our National Facebook group for activists. The perfect place to interact with and stay connected to your Amnesty peers.

It is important during this time to practice self care and remain socially connected. Check out the self care pack for more tips and tricks.

Key dates & opportunities

Make sure you check here regularly for key dates and upcoming training opportunities.

<https://www.amnesty.org.au/activism-planner/>

Check here for events in your region <https://www.amnesty.org.au/events/> and please continue to submit Host an Event forms to have your events registered <https://www.amnesty.org.au/host-an-event-2/>

There are some volunteer and employment opportunities currently available <https://www.amnesty.org.au/work-with-us/positions/>

If your group does something in the next couple of months 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 Quarter 3 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.