

THE GRASSROOTS REPORT

2020 QUARTER 3 (JUL - SEP)



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: Chermside Action Group, who are celebrating their 15th year, spicing up activism by raising money and morale at the annual Bridge to Brisbane Fun Run (25.08.2019)

National Highlights from our Movement Manager - Sarah Gooderham

I am really excited to share with you all that we have now closed our vision consultation that ran from September 7 to October 12. Thank you to everyone who contributed to shaping our strategic direction over the next five years. It has been incredible to hear all the exciting and interesting ideas you all had to share. The next steps for this important work will be to share with all of you a summary of the findings of this consultation early November and for staff to work through these findings to pull together our strategic plan. We are all part of this movement because we want to make real human rights change and this new vision will provide the direction for us all to unite behind for the next five years to achieve that.

I also want to highlight some significant wins from the last 3 months.

We launched our #ProtectProtest campaign and started to collect [selfie](#) actions which will be displayed on postcards to MPs and on billboards around the country at a key moment. If you haven't already, please [add your selfie](#) to #ProtectProtest, and ask your networks to do the same. We also rolled out our human rights observers program and trained x human rights observers to make sure that we are ready to protect protest whenever we need to.

We contributed 100,000 signatures to the 400,000 collected globally for Assange. The video of the AIA handover can be [found here](#). We took this hand over moment as a key moment to test some new actions and we mobilised 1700 people in a Twitter storm and had 135 people attend a virtual rally and take further action.

And for refugees AIA refugee advocates and activists across Australia managed to block the proposed legislation banning mobile phones from immigration detention. Our community sponsorship campaign also hit a big milestone in reaching 40 local governments in support of a more fair and just sponsorship program, with the cities of Palmerston, Darwin, Logan, Toowoomba and Banyule coming on board. Many of you have been deeply invested in this campaign. It's incredible to see local councils continue to come on board to keep up the great work.

It's for all of these reasons and many more I love being part of this movement. Together we are powerful and together we continue to make changes like the ones highlighted here. Thank you for all that you do to challenge injustice.



Sarah Gooderham
Movement Manager



AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL AUSTRALIA

WRITE THE FUTURE!

Regional Highlights

Maddie Wood (QLD / NSW President)
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Happy 15th Birthday Chermside Action Group and welcome to the three new members of the Chermside Famnesty.

Cheers to an epic group of dedicated and passionate people who's 15 years of meetings, letter writing, events, petition gathering, and advocacy has shone a spotlight on Amnesty and the issues we support both in Brisbane and the wider community. A huge thank you to all the members who have contributed their time so generously over the years and made such a meaningful impact on the human rights issues they campaign for. Keep up the awesome activism, we love your work!

The group celebrated their 15th birthday at their Stop the Death Penalty event held on the 10th of October at the local library. Attendees wrote letters for various death penalty cases including letters for the four journalists facing the death penalty in Yemen.

Want to join the Chermside Famnesty? On the last Tuesday of the month the group meets via Zoom to write urgent action letters and have resumed meeting face to face at the Chermside Library on the second Sunday of the month to host their monthly meeting.

A few hours north of Brisbane we have our Toowoomba Action Group whose main focus has been the submission to the Review of Community Sponsorship of Refugees. The group reported a wonderful response with positive comments on the submission from some key influencers in the region. Phil Armit from the group commented, "The comments combined give a pretty good picture of how welcome the settlement is and how it has developed here over the past twenty years. That makes one realise just how much social infrastructure there is to support social integration of refugees here."

The group also engaged with MPs sending a letter to Deb Frekington asking her to address



the comments she made regarding raising the age of criminal responsibility after she quoted saying "raising the minimum age of criminal responsibility would be a complete cop-out for residents suffering from youth crime." Always in the action, the group also met with LNP member David Janetzki to discuss youth justice policies which coincide with Amnesty's Community is Everything Campaign.

I am delighted to report that activism is alive and thriving in the region. A huge thank you to all our awesome activists, you are the change makers getting it done.

Kevin Sweeney (NSW President)
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Quarter 3 has been constrained by the Covid-19 restrictions but groups have adapted in various ways. The Eastern Suburbs group has focused on online letter writing and petitions, collaborating with the People4Assange group, and starting to use QR Codes for collecting petition signatures on the street! Wollongong group has been letter writing and meeting by Zoom. Coffs Coast have continued distributing their regular newsletter to about 330 supporters, with calls to action and links, and have contributed to a submission to the review of the Community Support Program. The Maitland group has been busy from home with petitions and submissions and are about to resume face to face meetings. The Mudgee group have continued their monthly meetings via Zoom, and with their twice-weekly letter writing they have now reached a total of 680 letters for the year. They have also been planning for a busy final quarter with three stalls, a film night and a Write for Rights event.

Regional Highlights

The Newcastle group combined with HASA to run a “7 Years Too Long” rally in Newcastle - face to face and online via Zoom. Farhad, Mori and Ahmad, who are all in detention, joined the rally by Zoom and spoke honestly and powerfully about what has been done to them and the continuing injustice. The Newcastle group also concentrated on writing letters, signing petitions, writing submissions to the review of the Community Support Program and the IPC assessment of the Narrabri Gas Project, and campaigning on Raise the Age and the Mobile Phones Bill. The Redfern group hosted an online forum titled “Australia’s Shame: How the justice system is failing First Nations People”. The Avalon group has continued to meet by Zoom and has concentrated on online actions. In September, the NSW ALC held an online get-together for NSW Convenors and Activists to share ideas, discuss activism during Covid, and discuss ways to better engage with young people.



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

With WA now experiencing the relaxation of most covid restrictions, we are in the fortunate position of being able to meet face to face and hold events within the stage 4 guidelines.

Youth activists from the Schools Network and university groups met in July to develop and implement a Youth Action Plan, with a view to growing a strong network of engaged and informed youth activists, provide opportunities for collaboration and skillsharing, and linking youth activists to the wider movement. An

example of the skill and engagement is the UWA Group’s September livestream event, [Refugees, Rights, and Rec](#), an insightful evening of deep diving into domestic and global refugees issues, which included hearing the personal stories of refugees living in Australia.

Women’s Rights has seen a resurgence in Amnesty WA with the formation of a new group, which will initially focus on the 16 days of action, a campaign which calls for action to end violence against women. Their first event will include live music performances by two incredible female artists, Stella Donnelly and Princess Khanya, and feature speakers from partner organisations.

Convenors and activists contributed to a robust vision consultation session at the WA Action Centre with themes emerging around the need to centre fundamental rights and freedoms, and also remain relevant and responsive to contemporary crises.

WA marked the World Day Against the Death Penalty with a vigil in Forrest Place with a small group of committed activists and in partnership with PEN International. Speakers included Euan Gleeson-Brown, Chelsea Francis, Christa Kaltenbrun-Long and our dedicated Urgent Action Network convenor, Tom Oliver.

And in a wonderful example of activist leadership, Libby Williams collated a submission to the federal government regarding the Community Sponsorship Program which is currently under review. Libby and the Fremantle Group continue to contribute to the Carrad Pantry Project to collect much needed food and essential items for refugees living in the community.



Regional Highlights

Katrina North (VIC ALC President)
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Victoria now has 25 groups and Networks. Four University groups, 7 Networks and 14 local Action Groups.

It has been a difficult quarter for some of our groups and Networks due to Covid 19 restrictions. But our ALC members have reached out to Convenors and are working hard to support groups and Networks in any way we can.

A new Action Group

Our newest group is the Alpine Group based around the Bright area. This group has been set up by Emily Rose who is the former secretary of our ALC/ Branch Committee. We wish the group well and look forward to hearing about what they have planned in the future.

Good news for our AIA Community Sponsorship Campaign

The North East Metro Action Group have had a hard year. The group have been going for over 40 years and they usually have stalls and other events to promote five different AIA campaigns. A couple of years ago they managed to get over 1000 actions in one year! But in 2020 because of Covid 19 and Melbourne going into lockdown every event they had planned has been cancelled.

They have managed to achieve something significant nevertheless. With the help of a Councillor at the Banyule Council they have secured support for our AIA Community Sponsorship Campaign. After the local elections the Mayor of Banyule will write to the Federal Government in support of expanding the Refugee Sponsorship Program in Australia.



Victoria Activist Vision Consultation

The Victorian Activism Leadership Committee have planned an AIA Vision Consultation session, for Victorian activists, on the 8th of October. This will be an opportunity for our activists to discuss what we want to see AIA doing for the next five years. This will feed into phase two of the consultation process.

Our ALC Legal Activism Subcommittee

Our ALC Legal Activism Sub-Committee is made up of deeply passionate and committed legal practitioners who are engaged members of our legal profession and the broader community, and believe in the role of the rule of law in protecting and defending human rights for all.

In July 2020 the subcommittee presented our first social justice submission to the Victorian Legal Services Board in response to their review of the professional development of lawyers. We advocated for the inclusion of a mandatory human rights subject and that volunteering at a human rights organisation should be considered a relevant professional development activity. We continue to liaise about ongoing issues and law reform opportunities and look forward to contributing to further reviews and inquiries this year.

Activist Highlights

We like to recognise Jan Govett, for stepping up as the new Bendigo group convener and congratulate the group on their [recent local media coverage](#).

In August the Margaret River Amnesty group hosted a powerful event visually representing the outrageous 437 Aboriginal deaths in custody which also captured [local media attention](#). Amnesty Margaret River is petitioning federal government to implement the recommendations from the 1987 Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody which would call a halt to much of this suffering.

One of the activists from our Youth Advisory Group and national LGBTQI Network, Fin Spalding, was featured in an international Amnesty profile on [7 people who had great ideas during COVID](#).

Together between July and September 2020 our activists held 25 completed events. In the same period, Amnesty staff ran 24 online webinars (some were co-led with activists) which were attended by more than 150 activists. In August we formed the national Activist Skills Collective recruiting three leadership roles (Program Coordinator, Training Facilitator, and Events & Logistics Coordinator) and five Skills Facilitators. This collective will deliver skills development opportunities online (and face-to-face, when and where we can) using the skills training modules which can all be found on the [Skill Up section of the website](#). We welcome Anshu, Annette, Lily, Brendan, Farhiyo, Farid, Lakshmi and Brenna! Check out the [Activism Planner](#) for up-coming opportunities to meet them and share in our up-skilling program, maybe you have skills you'd like to share with the movement too!



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!



Quarter 3 Data: July- September 2020

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.

2020 Q3 data	ACT/SNSW	NSW	QLD/NNSW	SA/NT	TAS	VIC	WA	National	Total Q3
No. of groups (total)	9	29	19	11	5	23	14	12	122
No. of activists (total)	97	403	132	75	47	162	107	83	1106
<i>- Core level</i>	<i>16</i>	<i>27</i>	<i>24</i>	<i>20</i>	<i>10</i>	<i>23</i>	<i>24</i>	<i>-</i>	<i>144</i>
<i>- Committed level</i>	<i>21</i>	<i>113</i>	<i>53</i>	<i>24</i>	<i>18</i>	<i>66</i>	<i>29</i>	<i>26</i>	<i>350</i>
<i>- Engaged level</i>	<i>60</i>	<i>263</i>	<i>55</i>	<i>31</i>	<i>19</i>	<i>73</i>	<i>54</i>	<i>57</i>	<i>612</i>
No. of members (total)	396	1620	672	466	202	1521	416	102	5395

2,499 letters have been written by Urgent Action takers around the country between July - September. A particular shout out to the VIC Urgent Actions network who collected almost half of that total (1,281) and to the Western Suburbs group (WA) who individually collected 463 throughout the last quarter.

Key takeaways

Going well / On track

- Our movement is continuing to adapt to COVID restrictions. Activists are mastering zoom, exploring QR codes and getting creative with new ways to connect and have impact.
- We have worked to improve communications this quarter by adding more activists to Slack and ensure all activists receive more timely updates about campaigns. Activists have reported back that they appreciated the [Quarterly Update for Activists](#), the [Campaign Updates for Movement](#) and the increasing campaign content in the People Powered Bulletin.
- We have seen improvements in reporting by working with Urgent Action Networks around the country to capture the breadth of their activism through this [Urgent Action tracking form](#).
- Consultation across our movement was strong this quarter in large part due to the extensive Vision consultation process as well as establishing an Activist Campaign Strategy team to help shape the Write for Rights campaign. We must continue this approach and prioritise it going forward.

Areas to improve

- This year has been focused on mostly responsive campaigning to which activists have adapted well. We're hoping in the next quarter and beyond we'll be able to unite activists behind key campaigns like Game Over, World Day Against the Death Penalty and of course, Write for Rights
- Continue to improve and prioritise consultation with our movement including people with lived experience. As part of this it's also essential that our staff and movement are trained and supported in working with people with lived experience appropriately.
- We need to review our data in the next 3-6 months, while we are seeing growth in our activist and group base we want to make sure it's accurate particularly in light of COVID19.
- With the recruitment of our new Activist Skills Collective we are hoping to improve the quantity and quality of our skills development opportunities.

Vision Update

Write the Future was Amnesty International Australia's consultation to guide our movement and the broader organisation into the next five years. With nearly 4,000 people completing surveys or taking part in the online discussion forums hosted by CitizenLab, there is a lot of data and feedback to review — and we plan to go over everyone's comments and suggestions with the time and care you put into them. Thank you all for taking part.

Just because the consultation period is formally shut, it doesn't mean we've closed the conversations. Before we launch the final Vision next year, we will share our preliminary consultation findings with the movement in early November. Following this, the Movement manager assistant will support Project managers to access and analyse results relating to their work to ensure that the consultation is being used in on-going strategy and planning across Amnesty International Australia. If you have any questions, don't hesitate to contact movementmanagerassistant@amnesty.org.au

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 and Upcoming 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.
