

THE GRASSROOTS REPORT

2021 QUARTER 1 (JAN-MAR)



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 2021 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

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National Highlights from the Movement Manager

After all of the ups and downs of the last year, I am excited to report that the start to 2021 has been jam-packed with incredible actions and events both offline and online. It is so incredible to have our movement back out on the ground again across Australia. We have learned so much about digital activism in the past year that we can utilise to make our approaches stronger and more effective. But what excites me is pairing this knowledge with our offline grassroots activities and actions with clear and meaningful activist journeys, so we can expand our reach and impact even further.

There are so many highlights of this in action, but two clear examples that are worth drawing attention to are our Brazen Hussies partnership for International Women's Day, which included a mix of activist led online and local offline film screenings. There was also an online screening that included a panel discussion with the filmmaker and special guests that led to important and much needed conversations focused on intersectional lived experiences. This conversation was continued at the upcoming Women's Movement themed [GetActive](#) on Mon 19 April. Secondly, the incredible efforts of activists on [Palm Sunday](#), which involved online calling parties, local events and physical postcards being delivered to MPs to put further pressure on our prime minister to accept the New Zealand deal.

However, for me, the highlight of the start of the year has to be the absolute privilege of attending ALC meetings and events to launch [our vision](#) with national director Sam Klintworth. I am so proud of what we have developed together. This vision belongs to all of us - it is a vision that is shaped by the voices of 8,000 of our supporters, which has been produced through thousands of online conversations, regional meetings, Zoom sessions and surveys. This is our vision, and we are unstoppable together.

These sessions have provided an opportunity for me to reconnect with our movement and to be reminded of what makes us unique - our investment in each other as agents of change. I cannot wait to breathe life into this vision with you all and to work side by side with you to achieve this shared strategic direction.

Thanks for your continued dedication and passion for human rights, and a special thank you to you all for your contribution to shaping our vision.



Sarah Gooderham
Movement Manager

Regional Highlights

Kathryn Allan (ACT / SNSW President) / actsnswpresident@amnesty.org.au

The ACT/SNSW Region has had a busy few months! Our focus has been on issues facing women and gender diverse folks, with events for International Women's Day happening all over the region. The ALC hosted an event that looked at Domestic Violence in COVID19 and some incredible discussions were had that covered the intersections of issues within Aboriginal communities, Refugee, Asylum Seeker, and migrant persons, and the nuances in the queer community. The event was attended by the general public, public servants, and Emma Davidson MLA. We launched our petition to include Coercive Control into ACT domestic violence legislation that asks for specific consultation with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

ACT based volunteers took part in handing over petition signatures from the Write for Rights campaign to various embassies where staff had meetings.

On Raise the Age, the ACT Legislative Assembly included Amnesty in its consultation. Activists are learning how to write submissions on the proposed legislation.

Amnesty attended and assisted in organising many protests including: March for Justice (and Sally Rugg even helped us pack up!!), Justice for Tigray (against the genocide in Ethiopia), Myanmar Vigil, a Snap protest the day the new National Cabinet met around gender based violence, RCDIC rally, and a gathering outside Parliament on the day of the Joint Standing Committee on Myanmar.

We are working closely with diaspora communities and those affected by human rights violations, and ensuring their voices are platformed.



Regional Highlights

Suzan Gencay (VIC President) / vicpresident@amnesty.org.au

Victoria currently has 25 groups and 1,389 members. Despite the pandemic's difficulties we've already had an active 2021.

Palm Sunday Justice for Refugees March

Activists gathered for the first Palm Sunday March with the Yackandandah Action Group making their way to Melbourne. The March finished at Park Hotel, Lincoln Square, where we were able to wave to some the refugees being detained in hotel rooms and sing our support.

The Bendigo Amnesty Group held a Palm Sunday Candlelit Vigil on the forecourt of St Andrews Uniting Church in Myers St, Bendigo.

The Ballarat Amnesty Group attended the Justice for Refugees March in the Botanical Gardens.

60th Birthday

Plans are in full force for a Melbourne CBD event and regional events to celebrate AIA's 60th Birthday.

The Victorian Activism and Leadership Committee will be hosting a 60th Birthday at Evie's Disco Diner in the afternoon on the 30th of May, which will include food and Amnesty-themed Trivia. With the help of our incredible photography network the event will be livestreamed via zoom.

Recruitment and Reinvigorate

Some of our groups are focusing on recruitment and skill building.

The Women's Rights Defender's Network held a Recruitment Session in early April.

Our LGBTIQ+ Convenors attended LGBTIQ+ Master Class Advocacy training in March.

Conversion Practices Bill

Our LGBTIQ+ Network undertook skills workshop called "Engaging MPs and the Media to end Conversion Practices" and joined the fight which led to the most comprehensive legislation in Australia to end harmful LGBTIQ+ conversion practices in Victoria.



Regional Highlights

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

During Quarter 1 2021, NSW groups have been holding final Write for Rights events, having film screenings, participating in Palm Sunday events, rallies for Myanmar and the Sydney Mardi Gras.

- Wollongong group had an article and photograph published in the Illawarra Mercury for the Time For A Home week of action.
- Eastern Suburbs group held a film screening of “When the Rivers Run Dry” and a face to face event, with speakers Aboriginal Elder Bruce Shillingsworth and the writer/producer Peter Yates. They co-hosted a screening of “Brazen Hussies” with the LGBTIQ+ network and speaker Eva Cox.
- Coffs Coast group had planned a stall at the Coffs Harbourside Markets for Harmony Day, but the markets were cancelled due to floods. They will try again with a stall for Refugee Week! They continue to produce a monthly newsletter which they email out to over 300 supporters, and they have been actively supporting the efforts of the local Burmese community on the Coffs Coast.
- Mudgee group continues to hold twice-weekly letter-writing sessions and held two “at home” Write for Rights sessions early in the year. They held a “Brazen Hussies” screening in March – including dinner with 60 attending, and they held a Myanmar vigil on Saturday followed by Burmese dinner.
- Dubbo group resumed face to face monthly meetings with letter-writing and are planning a screening of “Brazen Hussies” in May.
- LGBTIQ+ network participated in the scaled back ‘Covid-safe’ Sydney Mardi Gras and organised a screening of “Brazen Hussies” by Zoom with Eva Cox as a guest speaker, in conjunction with the Eastern Suburbs group.
- Newcastle group resumed face to face meetings in February; held an O Week stall at Newcastle University in partnership with The Wilderness Society; and held a vigil for the Biloela Family at Civic Park on March 5th (marking three years in detention), an online fundraiser for sponsorship and resettlement of refugees in Canada, and a Palm Sunday rally - all in partnership with Hunter Asylum Seeker Advocacy. The NSW ALC held a NSW Convenor and Activist Get-together by Zoom on March 20.



Regional Highlights

Leonie Alexander (WA President) / wapresident@amnesty.org.au

A new group, a new partnership and some fresh faces on the WA ALC marked the beginning of 2021 in WA. March saw the launch of the new Sheridan College Amnesty Group, convened by Pangestu Kamumut, leading a diverse group of international students. A unique and valuable addition to our youth sector.

The Mount Lawley Group held a screening of the Documentary “Brazen Hussies,” while the Fremantle Group organised guest speaker Dawn Barrington, musician and refugee rights activist to speak at their group meeting.

As we had planned carefully, we were able to respond at short notice to the increasingly horrifying events in Myanmar following the military coup, by supporting a fundraising event organised by the group “Friends of Myanmar.” Held on 27 March, Armed Forces Day in Myanmar, this event raised both awareness and funds to call for an end to the brutal crackdown on civilians.

This year’s International Women’s Day event led by the UWA Group, was supplemented by a series of snap actions in furious response to the serious allegations of sexual assault that recently rocked Parliament and the community. Amnesty activists attended the Women’s March 4Justice in Perth, led by the Women’s Rights Group and convenors Tara Boyhan (WR) and Nita Alexander (IR), demanding safety and respect for women and girls.

WA’s Palm Sunday Justice for Refugees was held as several concurrent events. Our Action Centre event featured speaker Mehdi Vakili, a refugee from Iran, who spoke of his time on Nauru and his ongoing advocacy for refugees caught in offshore detention.

A highlight was our WA Un-Zoomed Event, a gathering of our convenors and lead activists for the launch of the 2025 Vision, introduced by National Director Sam Klintworth. This was followed by a sizzling session of sharing by our WA Convenors – an unfiltered backward glance at the year that was, and a hopeful forward look at 2021. Shared plans, regional collaboration, and digital solidarity were some of the constructive and optimistic outcomes of this session, with groups now planning some wonderful actions to celebrate Amnesty’s 60th birthday.

A massive thank you to our WA leaders and activists for their incredible resilience, optimism, and contribution.



Regional Highlights

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

Kellie George has stepped down from the role of Mackay group convenor. We sincerely thank Kellie for all hard work, persistence and dedication, anyone who has the pleasure of working alongside Kellie can attest to what an awesome activist and legend she is. One of the highlights of Kellie's activism journey was taking the lead in campaigning to have Mackay successfully declared a Refugee Welcome Zone. Thank you, Kellie! We welcome Kathryn Johnson to the Amnesty as the new Mackay Convenor.

We also welcomed Meg Fitzgerald, who had contacted the ALC about re-starting the Griffith University (GU) Group. Meg filled us in on her progress – the group already has more than 20 members and will soon be registered with GU Student Guild. They even have their own domain name! Check out their web site www.griffithamnesty.com

The Chermside Group collaborated with Mu'ooz Eritrean Restaurant and hosted a Women's Day Dinner to demand full humanitarian access into Tigray where Eritrean refugees, many women and children, are struggling to survive.

Many groups across the region attended and helped organise rallies for Palm Sunday Walk for Justice for Refugees including Townsville, Toowoomba and the Gold Coast group to name a few.

The Townsville Amnesty group gave evidence at Inquiry into Proposed Changes to the Youth Justice Act. Ian Frazer, Jenny Brown and Peter Hanley, members of the Townsville Amnesty Action Group were invited to give evidence to the Inquiry conducted by the Legal Affairs and Safety Committee of the Queensland Parliament. Their presentation followed that given by Townsville Lord Mayor Jenny Hill.

The Groups submission, prepared by group member Ian Frazer, opposed all of the proposed changes to the Youth Justice Act, arguing that none of the amendments are likely to reduce re-offending. In fact, there seems to be an assumption at the heart of the tougher bail provisions that re-offending is inevitable. The group concluded that some positive changes that have been made in the youth justice area in Queensland are in danger of being reversed so the Government can be seen to be "tough on crime".



Youth in our Movement

Our Youth Advisory Group has led a huge recruitment process this quarter to recruit new YAG members across all regions.

This new process ensures that YAG is fulfilling a key part of Amnesty's [National Youth Strategy](#) by achieving regional representation.

Keep an eye out on our [Youth in our movement](#) section on the [website](#) to meet all our new recruits.

Membership and Governance

- Member communication plan finalised so as to keep members informed of how and when they can nominate for positions (on Activism Leadership Committees, as General Meeting Voters or as Board members) and when they can vote.
- Call for Activism Leadership Committee and General Meeting Voters went out as planned on 3 March, including a simplified system to nominate.
- In 2021, there are 64 GMV and 47 ALC positions to fill. Many activities have taken place and different channels have been used so as to promote the roles.
- Member communications are being carefully managed so as to avoid confusion between the ALC/GMV nominations process, Board nominations in April, nominations to international positions and the recruitment of the Youth Delegate to the 2022 Global Assembly.
- Exploratory conversations have been held with firms that can assist with real-time counting of votes at the Annual General Meeting. [TrueVote](#) is the preferred provider as they can provide the service as well as act as returning officer at a competitive and discounted price.
- All Membership renewal, lapsed and credit card expiry calls have been brought up to date.
- Requests for capturing more data on members during sign up, including accepting 16 and 17 year olds, are progressing through the approval processes needed, as well as being scoped by the data team.

Quarter 1 Data: January - March 2021

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.

2021 Q1 Data	ACT/SNSW	NSW	QLD/NNSW	SA/NT	TAS	VIC	WA	NA	National Q1	National Q4
No. Groups (total)	13	43	24	22	9	33	18	2 (National) 3 (NA)	127	118
No. of Activists (total)	131	364	124	81	46	145	79	148	1,118	1,093
-Engaged	84	235	47	27	17	55	38	98	601	589
-Committed	34	90	51	31	20	61	19	46	352	342
-Core	13	39	26	23	9	29	22	4	165	162
No. Members (total)	371	1,510	641	450	186	1,384	384	123	5,049	4,899
Urgent Action totals	85	234	151	-	-	53	122	3	648	1,265

Key Takeaways

Going well / on track

- We have recently finished a huge round of recruitment, for positions in our Activist Communications team, Youth Advisory Group, Activist Skills Collective, Regional Communications Representatives, Community is Everything leads and more. We have onboarded some incredibly passionate people, and look forward to continuing to achieve human rights outcomes with more capacity, and a more diverse leadership structure which caters to a wider range of skills and interests.
- Prioritising a planning approach across the movement - Staff having a new project-based approach and most ALCs have completed plans for the coming six months of activism. We have seen a large portion of groups returning their group registrations, outlining some of the key moments they are working towards in 2021. It's exciting to see our Movement prioritising smart, sustainable and strategic activism.
- Recent Palm Sunday activities across the country really highlighted the work of our refugee rights activists, including the National Refugee Network, in organising a coordinated approach across the sector. This partnership work is so important to achieve human rights outcomes.

Areas to Improve

- While a number of action groups have completed and returned their group registrations, there are a number of groups who are yet to do so. Group registrations are so important for us to be able to determine the support needs of our Movement.
- Managing planned versus unplanned work: the unfolding situation in Myanmar highlighted the need for a clear plan for responsive campaigning, particularly clarifying the role of staff and activists in those situations, the division of work, and how to keep each other informed.

Keep Connected

Keep connected with our [National Group for Activists](#) on Facebook. It's the perfect place to interact with and stay connected to your Amnesty peers.

Key Dates and Upcoming Opportunities

We are excited to be celebrating Amnesty International's 60th Anniversary – that's 60 years of strangers supporting strangers, 60 years of individuals taking a stand against oppressors and governments, and 60 years of fighting for fundamental human rights.

We want to make this a moment of celebration and invigoration, an opportunity to both commemorate all the great work that's already been done and to inspire others to join us in the fight to Challenge Injustice.

We are setting the bar high for this celebration and aim to support 60 events across the nation. This is a moment that brings us together and invites others to join the movement. [Find out how you can get involved!](#)

This 60th Birthday is a celebration of activists like you, so thank you for all the work you do in supporting our people powered movement!

Important dates:

3 May: [Quarterly Movement Webinar](#)

6 May: [Engaging the Media Skills Workshop](#)

10 May: [Get Active with Amnesty](#)

20-26 June: National Refugee Week

21 June: [Get Active with Amnesty](#)

Key 2021 governance dates:

7 May: Voting opens for [GMV and ALC members](#)

20 May: Voting closes for [GMV and ALC members](#)

3 July: Annual General Meeting held via videoconference, at which General Meeting Voters will vote on resolutions and for Board positions

Make sure you check the Activism Planner regularly for key dates and upcoming training opportunities at - <https://www.amnesty.org.au/activism-planner/>

For events in your region, go to - <https://www.amnesty.org.au/events/>

To host your own events, go to - <https://www.amnesty.org.au/host-an-event-2/>

Here are our learning resources on activism and leadership - <https://www.amnesty.org.au/skill-up/>

To find out more about volunteer and employment opportunities, go to - <https://www.amnesty.org.au/work-with-us/positions/>

If your group does something in the next few 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 2 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.

