



GROUP CONVENOR GUIDE

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INTERNATIONAL**



**CHALLENGE
INJUSTICE.**



Manly Action Group market stall petitions © Amnesty International

WELCOME

Being part of a team is central to the experience of being an activist. Through teamwork we achieve more impact. We have people to celebrate the wins with and for support during tough times. But, strong teams need strong leadership and this is where you come in. As a Convenor of a group or network, your role is to inspire other activists to challenge injustice through people power. Whether you are taking over the Convenor role from someone else, or starting up a new group, thank you for leading the way in defending human rights!

We've developed this guide as a go-to resource anytime you have questions about your role. We've covered a range of topics that should clarify many aspects of being a Convenor and you can always get in touch with us at communityorganising@amnesty.org.au if you need more information.

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Useful resources can be found at the following pages:

- [Action group development resources.](#)
- [Skill up:](#) Develop your activist or leaderships skills.
- [Activism planner:](#) Calendar of important dates, webinars and campaign moments.
- [Activist resources:](#) Information and materials for specific campaigns and more.
- [Resources for Convenors:](#) a comprehensive list of resources with links.

What does a Convenor do?

The main responsibility of a group Convenor is to make sure the group is functioning well as a team. This includes having goals that everyone is working towards. It means a clear team structure and roles, so everyone knows who is doing what. There needs to be regular communication and transparency. That way everyone knows what is happening and can contribute. Finally it means making sure the team is healthy and happy so you can all focus on your activism.

A Convenor needs to:

- Inspire and lead the team to have shared goals that everyone is happy with. This also means facilitating planning sessions and making sure activities are in line with AIA priorities. It is a good idea to have an annual planning process for the group.
- Ensure these plans are on track and that everyone has a way to contribute. This could include delegating roles and tasks to people.
- Build relationships and have regular communication with team members. You will work out what people need to thrive within the team. You're also on the lookout for opportunities to help people develop themselves.
- Have a good knowledge of AIA resources, processes and contacts for support. You should also be the primary contact between the group and AIA staff and the regional Activism Leadership Committee (ALC).
- Track the health of the group and know when to ask for advice or help when needed.
- Keep learning how to be a more effective leader, there's always ways to make teams stronger.

There are other tasks that someone in the group needs to do. If someone hasn't put their hand up to do them then it might fall to you as Convenor. Feel free to share the responsibility for these if there is an opportunity. Distributed leadership is a great thing and means you have more capacity. It is not Convenor's role to do all the work, make sure everyone has meaningful tasks to do.

The team also needs someone to:

- Keep on top of the team's communications e.g. group email, social media etc.
- Facilitate meetings (this could be on rotation).
- Keep track of what is happening with AIA campaigns and internal matters. Each team member could have their own area they are point of contact for.
- Act as spokesperson for the group e.g. for the community, local media etc.
- Create and maintain partnerships within the community.
- Grow the group's membership and build new relationships with people.

What skills and attributes will you need?

A Convenor needs to be:

- Respectful, collaborative and willing to consider other views.
- Have good interpersonal skills - able to engage well with people, be supportive, facilitate discussions and be able to manage people.
- Have commitment and enthusiasm, be able to allocate sufficient time and see things through.
- Have basic IT skills with email programs, internet browser, navigating websites and file management.
- Have basic organisational skills such as planning and running a meeting and organising an event.
- Have a strong commitment to human rights.

What's in it for you?

You will gain the experience of leading a team and in community organising. You will get to work with others to do meaningful activism that matters to you. You'll be able to meet new like-minded people and build lasting relationships. You'll be part of a global movement and can take advantage of all the opportunities this provides. This includes personal development and feeding into the direction of the movement. Finally, you get to make a difference for human rights!

Time commitment

This does vary widely depending on the level of activity of your group/network and the degree that you can share work with other group members. Typically it would be:

- Monthly group / network meeting: preparation (1 hour) & meeting (2 hours)
- Managing the group / network email address and communicating regularly with group / network members: - 1 to 2 hours per week
- Campaigns and events - 1 to 2 hours per month
- Attending relevant Amnesty webinars and meetings - 1 to 2 hours per month
- Developing community partnerships and relationships - 1 to 2 hours per month

Which adds up to 2 to 4 hours per week. Some of this can be delegated to others in your group / network. Some Convenors manage it comfortably in less than 2 hours per week.

What support is available?

There is plenty of support to assist new Convenors in their role, including:

- The outgoing Convenor (usually) or a 'buddy' Convenor from another action group.
- The [Activism Leadership Committee](#) (ALC) member who is the direct support for your group / network.
- A comprehensive compilation of the resources for Convenors and groups / networks [here](#).
- Amnesty Supporter Care team (activism@amnesty.org.au) for event support, resources and funding, event promotion, payment of invoices and reimbursement of expenses.
- Amnesty Organising Team (communityorganising@amnesty.org.au) for other support including advice, training, leadership development, campaign strategy and mobilisation of activists for events.
- The Regional President and other ALC members for issues that cannot be resolved by staff.

There is an [induction process](#) for new Convenors to help you learn the ropes.



Activists at NSW action centre. © Amnesty International

Tasks for Convenors

Make sure to check out the [Skill Up](#) page on our website for more information on many of the tasks that follow from here.

Essential immediate tasks (First 1 - 2 months):

- Manage or set up the group / network email account.
- Pass on important information to group / network members.
- Organise regular meetings with group / network members.
- Manage the group / network's social media or, preferably, delegate this to another group member.
- Register group / network events on the Amnesty website and complete evaluations.
- Keep up to date with Amnesty campaigns and information and the potential for involvement of group members.
- Be the primary contact point between the group / network, Amnesty staff and the Activism Leadership Committee. Contact these as soon as possible so they know who the new Convenor is and to build close relationships with them.
- Meet with team members as individuals, find out more about what they want from the team. How can you make sure they will continue to be a part of the team and build strong relationships with them.

Longer term tasks (First 1 - 6 months):

- Lead an annual planning process for the group / network, including campaigns and events.
- Delegate tasks and roles to others in your group / network.
- Develop (over time) a sound knowledge of Amnesty resources, processes and contacts that will support group/network activities.
- Take the initiative to call people together and initiate campaigns and events when required.
- Develop new events and actions to progress campaigns and make your group visible (e.g. holding a stall and petition signing at markets, hold a film screening, meet with your local MP).
- Identify and nurture members who have valuable skills and leadership potential.
- Create and maintain partnerships with key groups and individuals in the community.
- Ensure that your group is visible and connected in your community e.g. through local media, local MP, local council.
- Actively recruit new members and / or skilled volunteers.
- Consider succession planning options.

You can seek assistance and support from AIA Staff and ALC members for any of these tasks.

Starting a New Group or Network

Start by meeting with one of the Organising Team (communityorganising@amnesty.org.au) and one of the [Activism and Leadership Committee](#) (ALC) members in your region, to discuss your ideas and get some advice.

Commence the [New Convenors Induction](#)

Plan what your group or network will focus on or do and how to promote your new group or network. This may include:

- Talking to friends, family and neighbours to see if they are interested in being involved.
- Identifying what issues your community feels strongly about.
- Creating a Facebook Group and invite your friends.
- Placing posters or flyers in local cafes and businesses.
- Do a letterbox drop.
- Place an article in your local newspaper.
- Ask the Organising Team about contacting Amnesty supporters in your local area and inviting them along.
- Ask the Organising Team about advertising in national and regional newsletters.
- Organise a stall for a market day and have a sign-up sheet at the stall and let people know the time and place for the next meeting.
- Research other ways to promote your event e.g. community notice board, library, community events calendar or website.
- Invite members from other local community groups e.g. churches, Rotary or Lions Clubs, Local Parents and Citizens Groups.

Tips for promoting your group

- Be specific - have a flyer with dates, times and locations for meetings or events.
- Make it easy - a convenient time and venue for your first event or meeting goes a long way to getting new members.
- Be excited - if you are excited others will be too.
- Have an elevator pitch - practice explaining what Amnesty is about and what your group does in less than 30 seconds.
- Don't feel embarrassed - most people who approach you will want to get involved with Amnesty International.

If you want some help with your messaging check out our guide on [Effective Communications](#).

Hosting your first meeting

When you are ready to hold your first meeting you will need to be prepared. Make sure you can do some or all of the following:

- Set a date, time and venue for the meeting.
- Work out what you want to cover at the meeting. General business, campaign updates, planning for activities etc. Print an agenda for people to follow so everyone knows what will be covered.
- Bring some Amnesty International information for people to read.
- Think about a way to make sure people feel at home. Food & drinks? Ice-breakers? You can seek funding through the [Host an Event](#) form if you need to pay for anything.
- Have a way to collect attendee contact details.
- Aim to accomplish something for human rights e.g. sign a petition, write a letter or take a solidarity photo action to post to your social media.
- As a new Convenor, you may want to have a conversation with your group about norms and expectations. Even if these remain the same as with the last Convenor, having a new leader is a great opportunity to refresh and remind everyone of these.
- If you like, you can invite another Convenor or ALC member to the meeting for support.

Making meetings work

- Make an effort to talk to new members and make them feel included. Arrange to have someone in the group be point of contact for them in the early stages. This will help with retention.
- Ensure everyone gets the chance to speak and participate – try assigning roles in the meeting, such as one person to explain the letters to be written, and another person to talk about a new campaign.
- You can also ask other group members to prepare and present agenda items on a rotating basis, to share the work and allow opportunities for more people to input.
- Leave time for discussion.
- Clarify and summarise items as need be, and try to reach a consensus.
- Identify clear actions and who will do them. Keep a rolling action items list to review at each meeting and discuss progress.
- Keep to the allocated meeting time.
- Allow time to socialise.

On the night

- Remember to always begin your group meetings by acknowledging the traditional custodians of the land that you are meeting on.
- Organise someone to take the meeting minutes.
- Have everyone introduce themselves. This applies during the entire year whenever a new person attends.

Outside of group meetings

- Be in contact with group members outside of your monthly meeting, or facilitate another group member to keep the group in contact.
- Advise of the agenda, and anything group members need to prepare ahead of time.
- Keep track of any communications or information which may be relevant to group members. Collect points for discussion at the next meeting, or communicate anything important to group members between meetings.

Group Planning

It is a good idea to have a major planning session at least once a year. This is to make sure everyone is on the same page from the outset. It is the best way to maximise group impact and make sure everyone enjoys themselves!

- What do people hope to do?
- Which Amnesty campaigns does the group want to focus on?
- What type of events and actions does the group want to do?
- What roles are group members willing to undertake?
- As well as defending human rights, the group should be social. When do you want to socialise? Before or after the meeting, at a bar or café, or in your own creative way?

For more on planning check our guides on: [Strategic thinking](#) and [Events & tactics](#).

Roles and Delegating

Once you have recruited group members, remember to set the foundations of a group that shares the load. Impress upon your group that the group's health is up to all of you. However, avoid the temptation to do it all yourself – you will burn yourself out.

Basic Administration

Every group needs to do a few things to function well. Make sure the following happens regularly in your group:

- An updated group member list is maintained, and everyone knows about meetings and activities.
- Elections for group roles are held each year.
- Any changes to the group's contact details are passed along to the Organising Team.
- Planning sessions are held once or twice a year.
- Group members are invited to become financial members of Amnesty – which means they can vote at AGMs and be involved in governance decisions.

Delegating

The experience of other groups shows that the more responsibility is divided up, the more the group will retain members. You can delegate small tasks on a monthly basis:

- Sharing or rotating the chairing, agenda-setting and minute-taking of each meeting
- Appointing 'buddies' to new members

Roles

You can ask for volunteers to look after particular group roles on an ongoing basis, or hold an informal election to choose people. The choice of roles may be different for each group. Here are some useful ideas:

- **Convenor and Co-Convenor:** Coordinate the group as a whole, plan activities, provide leadership, run meetings, and receive and manage the group's email. It is a definite advantage to share this role between two people (Co-Convenors) to spread the load, provide cover when one is away, and for succession planning.
- **Communications lead:** media, social media, advertising of events etc.
- **Team leads** for specific events, activities or campaigns.
- **Relationships lead:** Welcomer, new member orientation, social coordinator.
- **Liaison** with external groups, for example with young people - e.g. local university, schools (Social Justice Groups) and other youth groups.
- Someone to coordinate actions at activities in meetings such as action taking (letter writing / urgent actions), minute taking, etc.
- **Fundraising lead**
- **Photographer**

If there are regular tasks that need to be done then it could be worth having someone in the group take on that role. For everything else you can ask for volunteers to help share the load.

Running Events

1. Plan

Remember to plan your events to ensure they achieve as much human rights change as possible. As a guide, your events should:

- Be an opportunity for community members to learn about human rights issues.
- Facilitate community members to take action for human rights.
- Find new group members and Amnesty supporters.
- Contribute to priority campaign strategies.

2. Submit an event proposal

For most events, your group will need to submit an event proposal form [here](#).

Submit your event proposal at least 4 weeks before your event (6 weeks or more for large events).

Once the Supporter Care Team have received your event proposal they can support your group in a number of ways e.g. getting resources like banners, posters, pamphlets and action cards, promotion and approval of funding.

Registering your event with Amnesty also provides you with Public Liability insurance for the event.

3. Funding

You can normally obtain funding in two ways:

- Submitting a claim for reimbursement for non-event expenses (e.g. postage, printing)
- Request funding as part of an event proposal.

If you run a fundraising event, the money raised should be deposited or transferred to Amnesty promptly after the event.

If your group is approached by an individual or organisation that wishes to make a donation, contact the Supporter Care Team for advice.

For more on running events check our guides on: [Events & tactics](#).

On-boarding new group members

Here are some tips for how to build relationships with new people joining your group.

- Make sure you welcome them to the group and make them feel part of the group.
- Take down their contact details and add them to any communications and mailing lists.
- Assign them a 'buddy' - an existing group member who can be their go-to person for any questions.

Retaining Group Members

Why do people come along to groups and how do you make sure they come back? People usually come to groups for three reasons:

- To understand human rights issues, share their knowledge and develop campaigning strategies. (Heads)
- To connect with people who feel as passionately about issues as they do. (Hearts)
- To use their skills to create change. (Hands)

If these are fulfilled at your meeting, people will enjoy the experience and be more likely to come back.

HEADS

Key points:

- Give group members the opportunity to learn more about campaigns.
- Give group members a chance to contribute their knowledge.
- Reinforce that all perspectives and contributions are valuable.

An action group meeting needs to be more than just information. Yes – it is an opportunity to watch documentaries, get campaign updates etc. – but it also needs to be a place where they can use this information. As the group Convenor, it is your job to facilitate this. Give everyone the opportunity to engage in planning. It shows that each group member is valuable and that their contribution is important.

HEARTS

Key points:

- Ask your group members if there are particular issues they feel strongly about. Tailoring your group's campaigning to members' particular passions will keep them engaged.
- Make sure people are socially connected in the group.

The group is an opportunity for people to express their outrage at human rights violations and find others who share the same values. So make sure people have a chance to make friends.

Foster a positive group dynamic - whether through an ice-breaker game at the start of each meeting, or a glass of wine at the end. Having a social element to your group's work can also increase human rights impact by having an opportunity to invite friends and family along to take action.

HANDS

Key points:

- Make sure hands-on action is part of your group's work.
- Delegate tasks.
- Identify group members' skills.

Take action and make change! People like to do things, so try and have some kind of action at each meeting – whether it be a petition to sign or a letter to write. It is also important that your group plans towards bigger things - whether it be a rally, information stall or a meeting with your MP.

Delegating responsibilities makes people feel included and important too. Giving people specific tasks to complete between meetings goes a long way in making people feel valued. Remember to tune in to what skills each individual has. Is someone a good writer? Or public speaker? Do they have creative flair? What task will best use their skills?

What's next?

We hope this has been a useful overview of what is involved with being a convenor and what you need to do. Remember that it takes time to become effective at anything, so don't feel you have to be an expert on this immediately. Take time to find your own way and become the type of convenor that suits you and your group.

If you have any questions you can get in touch with us at communityorganising@amnesty.org.au. Thank you for your time!



Visit the Skill Up page for more activist development resources.
www.amnesty.org.au/skill-up/

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