

PRESIDENT'S REPORT 2017

Mission of Justice for Refugees SA

The demand for the work of Justice for Refugees SA unfortunately has not diminished. This is due to the continuing harsh policies of the Federal Government which continue to flout international covenants and go beyond the bounds of moral and ethical policies. The current Federal Government seems to find new ways of de-humanising and vilifying people who, through no fault of their own, need to flee their homeland. Justice for Refugees SA will not be satisfied that its work is done until justice is served for the 30,000 people seeking asylum in Australia. Until their rights are upheld, we cannot rest.

Management Committee

The Management Committee has taken on its leadership role in a very serious manner. It's an active working committee that is committed working actively to change the situation for people seeking asylum.

There are some members who are not seeking re-election to the management. Each of them has contributed very significantly to the development of Justice for Refugees SA.

Max Beacom took on the role of Treasurer and has established a reliable system which works effectively and efficiently. Max has also been active in fundraising and has been a very important leadership person providing insightful ideas and reflections.

Julie Redman has been a significant leadership person in the development of Justice for Refugees SA. Julie has been important as a voice urging us to go the extra mile and her commitment to the cause of people seeking asylum has been outstanding. In addition, she has offered her business premises as the venue for our regular meetings and workshops.

Yunus Noori is also stepping down from the Committee. Yunus' circumstances changed after he was elected at the 2016 AGM. He has had a very busy year and we wish him well in the many activities that he supports for the cause of justice for refugees. Yunus has agreed to stay in contact with us to continue to connect Justice for Refugees SA with important cultural groups.

Thankyou to all the Management Committee who have contributed so significantly to ensuring the development and sustainability of Justice for Refugees SA. To Tina Dolgopol, Gary Wilson, Meredith Evans, Kate Walsh and more recently, Sandy Boyce - thanks so much for the work that you all do.

Strategic Planning

The Management Committee continues to refine its approach to addressing the issue of justice for refugees. This focuses on the plight of those 30,000 people seeking asylum and the uncertainty that they face due to systematic inaction in finalising their claims for by the Federal Government. The psychological and health impacts on this group of people are well understood. Yet the Federal Government continues to delay due process, vilify the people

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and their advocates, and to enforce measures that continue to flout international covenants to which Australia is a signatory.

Advocacy

The central focus for Justice for Refugees SA is to advocate for change in the policies of the Federal Government that affect the 30,000 people seeking asylum in Australia who have not had their circumstances resolved. Justice for Refugees SA relies on its close collaboration with the Circle of Friends movement to have access to the detrimental impact of these policies on the lives of people seeking asylum. The real stories of unjust treatment of people who have suffered in all sorts of ways

Justice for Refugees SA continues to grow its capacity to attempt to influence outcomes in these policy areas.

Member Forums

The Member Forums are an important means of communication with Justice for Refugees SA's supporters. It is important that we remain member driven and that members are involved in all activities of the organisation. The challenges are many and it is critical that the load is spread so that we can engage as many people of possible in this movement for change.

At our March forum Peter Mares, well known broadcaster and journalist, gave us very significant talk with insights into Australia's policies in relation to migrants and refugees. This sort of interaction with our members is critical to ensuring that we keep up-to-date with the best ways to address the issues we face.

We have facilitated important workshops with the End Child Detention Coalition and Amnesty International which have provided greater insights into our campaign strategy and assisted our planning.

Thanks to the Effective Living Centre at Christ Church for their hospitality in allowing us to use their space for many of our events during the year.

Palm Sunday Rally

Justice for Refugees SA coordinated the Palm Sunday Rally this year. Great thanks to Gary Wilson who chaired the committee that ran it and made it a success. The turnout was good despite the terrible weather. We look forward to coordinating this event in 2018 with significant learnings to make it an even bigger event.

Refugee Week

During Refugee Week we hosted *Freedom Stories*, an inspiring film about people who have settled in Australia and their stories of survival, overcoming challenges and taking up opportunities. This was a free event funded by the Adelaide City Council and was a great awareness raiser.

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Film Night

In November, Justice for Refugees SA held a very successful film night to raise funds to continue our campaigning work. Thanks particularly to Marie Wood and Max and Gina Beacom with their willing band of volunteers who made the night such a great success.

Broadley Trust Grant

The Broadley Trust granted Justice for Refugees SA \$10,000 to develop its role as a leading advocacy organisation in South Australia. This grant is enabling us to have personal contact with many refugee and asylum seeker organisations leading up to a summit which we will host in April 2018 to progress our collaborative advocacy work.

Ecumenical Grant

The Council of Churches provided us with a \$10,000 grant to gather some stories from refugees so that we can continue to speak with an authentic voice on important issues that affect the daily lives of people. The fruition of this work will become apparent in 2018.

Social Media

Justice for Refugees SA continues to be active on social media. Facebook and Twitter are a good way for our members and supporters to have access to up-to-date information.

Website

The Management Committee agreed to an upgrade of our website. This has been undertaken in stages and we are into the next stage of that now so that we can more effectively keep people informed.

Research

Pat Wright heads up our research effort and thanks to him we are able to produce statements and reflections of the highest quality. This is critical to our campaigning.

Federal Election

In the current political climate we don't know exactly when the election will be, but much of our planning is around being prepared for it. Advocacy in all its forms is being developed by the Management Committee so that we can have public speakers, members and supporters engaged with political candidates, and all aspects of media engagement to maximise the transmission of our message.

Catholic Archdiocese of Adelaide

The Catholic Archdiocese has again provided the funding for our Project Officer as well as providing office space and a supportive environment for Ruth to operate in. We are greatly appreciative of this support as it enables the work of Justice for Refugees SA to come to

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fruition. Recently the Archdiocese agreed to extend that funding for another 18 months. Thankyou in particular to Fr Philip Marshall and Heather Carey for their support of our work.

Project Coordinator

Our Project Coordinator, Ruth Jacobs, has been central to the development of Justice for Refugees SA in this 12 month period. Ruth's capacity to pull together all the various elements of the organisation's activities has been outstanding. With her role on the Board of the Refugee Council of Australia Ruth has ensured that South Australia has a strong voice at the national level. With limited resources, Ruth undertakes the role with the highest level of professionalism and with an intrinsic commitment to the cause of people seeking asylum and refugees.

The Next 12 Months

The focus will be on the Federal Election and mobilising our members and supporters. It is important that we grow our membership, both individuals and organisations. A critical part of our focus is that we continue to provide information and ways in which people can be involved in our campaign. These next 12 months will be critical to achieving positive outcomes for people seeking asylum who are relying on groups like us to advocate on their behalf.

Thank you to everyone who has contributed in whatever way and we look forward to that involvement continuing so that we can, together, bring about change.

John Haren

November 2017