

## WRITE A LETTER TO THE EDITOR

The Letters to the Editor is one of the most well read and talked about sections of a newspaper. Getting your letter published is a great chance to highlight your point of view to hundreds or even thousands of people in your state or local area.

**WHY?** Refugee issues are often sensationalised in the media, and we regularly read articles that ignore the facts.

This can have a huge impact on community perceptions of refugees. Countering myths and misconceptions, and highlighting the real stories of refugees in our local papers is a powerful way to change the debate in Australia.

### WHAT TO WRITE ABOUT?

**Something newsy:** Most published letters are in response to issues or stories the newspaper has recently featured. Respond as quickly as possible!

**Something personal:** Try to write about something you feel strongly about. Maybe it's a certain fact (like it's not illegal to seek asylum), or policy (like kids in detention).

### WHICH PAPER TO WRITE TO?

It is a lot easier to get your letter published in a local paper, and can have even more impact because it is coming from a local person.

Visit [www.newspapers.com.au](http://www.newspapers.com.au) to find details of all Australian newspapers or find the email address for the editor of your local paper in the 'contact us' section of its website.

### HOW LONG SHOULD IT BE?

**Keep it short:** 150-250 words is ideal. If you can make your point in 150 words and it carries all your main messages, leave it at that. Stick to one clear message.

**Break it up:** Compose your letter in short paragraphs. This gives the reader visual breaks, making it easier to read and easier to understand.



Australian people are really great. When people know my story they always understand and I think feel proud to help us.

*Najeeba, former refugee*

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## EXTRA HINTS

**Include contact details:** Always put your full name, address, phone number, email address and, if relevant, your position and organisation. Remember the power of your letter lies in the fact that you are a local person who has thought about this issue, so sign off as yourself not as Amnesty International.

**Research:** Before writing your Letter to the Editor, do some research on the types and styles of letters that get published. You will soon get a feeling for the common features of the letters that are printed and the language they use.

**Be polite:** By all means be clever and use your words in attractive or emphatic ways. But don't be abusive or crude because it won't be published.

**Be picky:** Don't write every day or respond to every issue. If you want to do more, pick several papers and write to one each week!

**Revise and edit:** As with anything for public consumption, you need to read, re-read and revise, tighten and focus your letter on the messages you want to get across.

### SEND US YOUR LETTER

Letting us know that you wrote to your paper helps us to track the progress of the campaign. Even better, send us a copy of the paper when your letter gets published.

[rethinkrefugees@amnesty.org.au](mailto:rethinkrefugees@amnesty.org.au)

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### HOW YOU KNOW IT'S WORKING?

If your letter gets published, ring the newspaper to find out the circulation of the paper. That is the number of people who have access to your words of wisdom!

If your letter doesn't get published, keep trying. But remember that the newspaper staff have still read your letter and noted your point of view - small things like this really can lead to more positive news coverage.

Remember, your letter is part of a national campaign, with activities happening all over Australia.

**Don't forget, if you need help with your letter, email the team at [rethinkrefugees@amnesty.org.au](mailto:rethinkrefugees@amnesty.org.au)**



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Lets others know about your letter through Facebook and use the [#rethinkrefugees](https://www.facebook.com/rethinkrefugees) hashtag



Let us know about your letter [rethinkrefugees@amnesty.org.au](mailto:rethinkrefugees@amnesty.org.au)