

THE GRASSROOTS REPORT

2020 QUARTER 4 (OCT - DEC)

WRITE FOR RIGHTS EDITION



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.

This report covers the last quarter of 2020, including all Write for Rights actions, some of which were held in January, 2021.

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: Collecting petition signatures to End the Death Penalty, NSW



NATIONAL HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE MOVEMENT MANAGER

2020 was quite the year, it's fair to say that there were challenges to overcome in every area of our lives and our activism was not immune. We had to shift to online approaches to our campaigning swiftly and purposefully to make sure that we continued to challenge injustice in the face of a constantly changing landscape. But adapt we did, and we were able to make change together.

To reflect on the collective action we took to challenge injustice in spite of COVID 19 is a powerful reminder of how strong, determined and innovative our movement is.

Here are just a few of our wins I'd like to remind you all of: our movement contributed 100,000 signatures to the 400,000 collected globally for Julian Assange; our community sponsorship campaign hit 40 local governments in support of a more fair and just sponsorship program; we deployed human rights observers at black lives matter rallies and we edged ever closer to ending offshore detention with our game over campaign hosting a mass calling party back in December with hundreds of you hitting the phones.

Write for Rights posed a challenge for us in 2020. We usually close out the year with action groups front and centre in their local communities hosting stalls and events and collecting hundreds of actions. Our newly formed activist strategy group grappled with this reality and rose to the challenge, developing in partnership with lead activists from across the country, 10 days of online action. These sessions featured speakers, slam poetry, photography, bands and most importantly action for our Write for Rights cases, contributing to the over 113,000 actions we have collected to date. You may have seen activists in Canberra handing over actions in the past few days!

It's been a tough year for sure but we are tougher. We are unstoppable together and no matter what we will continue to challenge injustice.

Over the last 4 months of 2020, 8000 of our supporters took part in our consultation to develop our people powered vision for the next five years. A vision that sets our strategic direction that will see us united behind priorities we set together and priorities that will see us make significant human rights change. I am excited to share this vision with you all and to get to work, shoulder to shoulder with all of you to bring it to life.

Thank you for everything you do and thank you for your determination and persistence always but especially over 2020.



Sarah Gooderham
Movement Manager

HIGHLIGHTS FROM REGIONAL PRESIDENTS

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

The ACT/SNSW region had a busy Q4, and even extended our events to include activists in Chile! Face to face events slowly started happening again, in a COVID19 safe way. The Wagga Wagga group and Moruya group were back regularly meeting and writing urgent actions, whilst planning for 2021. Activists in Canberra participated in Game Over activities including a handover at Parliament House with Sonny B Williams and Craig Foster. We also made sure to write up all of your messages from around the country to take with us!

The ALC hosted an online event, speaking to activists on the ground in Chile to learn about the situation and what we can do to help. The online event was directly connected to Gustavo's case from the Write for Rights campaign. This has sparked a connection and drive to continue to strengthen global activist networks; together we are so powerful.

Activists also attended a Write for Rights event at Parliament House, discussing the cases with MPs.

The ACT Youth Action Network got together to plan their first meeting, goals and impacts for the year. Activism that will be led by young people, for young people. They are going to be focusing on Raise the Age, as they closely connect to the campaign and the impact incarceration at such a young age can have on someone's life.



"Letters on the terrace" – NSW's first 2020 Write for Rights event



Write for Rights at home – January 2021

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

Victoria has started 2021 off with a bang with Suzan Genacy elected as President and Margherita Mezzasoma elected as Vice President. Our ALC have begun planning for our region in 2021 and are especially excited to celebrate the AIA 60th Anniversary on 28 May!

Even though 2020 was a very difficult year, it ended with hope with an amazing series of Write for Rights events. Whilst the majority of events took place online due to COVID restrictions, technology allowed us an opportunity for activists around Australia to come together to fight for human rights. The Victorian ALC participated in the National 10 Days of Action by organising an event "All About Human Rights" on 6 December. The night was a way for us to both welcome new people to the Amnesty family and celebrate our current activists with a Human Rights trivia night. We discussed the cases of human rights defenders Idris Khattak and Germain Rukuki who were imprisoned in their respective countries for dedicating their life to truth and justice. These cases represented what Amnesty stands for and were a great way to introduce new activists to the core values of our organisation.

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

During Quarter 4 2020, groups and networks have been busy working on W4R and starting to emerge from the Covid restrictions with some groups resuming face to face meetings and events. Activities of specific groups and networks include:

- NSW LGBTQI network has renamed itself the LGBTQIA+ network and held a very informative Zoom webinar on Dec 10 discussing and explaining the 'A+'. They also contributed to the National LGBTQIA+ network hosting one of the national W4R '10 Days of Action' webinars with a focus on LGBTQIA+ rights.
- Eastern Suburbs group hosted another of the national W4R '10 Days of Action'. They chose the case of Gustavo Gatica and the Right to Protest and had Indigenous leader Burruga Gutya and activist photographer Juno Gemes discuss protests and the importance of documenting them. The group also had their first in-person meeting in December, when they wrote letters and reconnected in person. Between the QR codes and pen and paper, they collected 137 actions in support of individuals at risk.
- Avalon group have been working on Time For A Home, W4R and recruiting some new members!
- Pennant Hills group held a face to face W4R meeting on Dec 5 resulting in 57 letters (37 of these hand written) and, in October, assisted the Hornsby group in collecting signatures for the End the Death Penalty petition
- Wollongong group held a W4R morning tea and wrote 71 letters and wrote 120 postcards with personalised messages to the individuals at risk. They also held a fundraiser auction and raised \$600 for Amnesty
- Maitland group got behind the Time For A Home campaign, signing the petition and circulating the campaign information to their networks. They also held an outdoor W4R event and meeting resulting in well over 100 actions (letters and petitions)
- Coffs Coast had a quiet quarter but continued to produce their monthly bulletin which they email to 330 supporters, along with other information and announcements. They are hoping to resume having stalls at the markets soon
- Forest group met face-to-face in October and November for dinner, discussion and letter writing, and ended 2020 with their annual Write for Rights Christmas celebration. Members, former members and friends met to sign letters and enjoy a barbecue lunch on a sunny afternoon in early December, signing a total of 126 W4R letters
- Newcastle group collaborated with other local refugee groups to promote the Time For A Home campaign 'week of action' through two vigils, petition signing, two opinion pieces published in the Newcastle Herald, a radio interview and writing signs in the sand on Newcastle beaches! For W4R, the group concentrated on getting letters signed through members' social networks (book club, church, music group etc) with a total of 788 letters signed.
- Mudgee group moved back to holding meetings face-to-face again, with some members still choosing to join via Zoom. The group continued its twice weekly letter-writing through to the end of the year, and reached its target of 1,000 in mid-December. One of the unexpected advantages of meeting twice a week was that group members keep in touch and are able to make progress with organising events, etc.

Other events during the last quarter included a NAIDOC Week stall and two stalls to campaign against the death penalty. To increase the ease of reading about the death penalty cases as people walked towards or past our stalls we used sandwich boards on top of tables, with large font to allow for social distancing. Each sandwich board featured one case only and included the QR code to link to the online petition. Print petitions were also available for those who were unable to use QR codes with hand sanitiser and take-away pens. A public screening of the highly-acclaimed film *In My Blood It Runs* was held in November. Two Write for Rights events have been held with a final one scheduled for February 1st. The venues for all three have been Amnesty members' private homes which has made for easy planning and has brought in new supporters. To date 135 letters have been written for W4R.



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

The newly formed WA Women's Rights group hosted their first event in December 2020 as part of the global campaign '16 days of activism against gender-based violence', which aims to raise awareness of violence against women in WA and encourage communities to take an active role in making change.

The event featured passionate speeches from domestic violence survivor Sheree Lucas Neto, First Nations woman and anti-domestic violence campaigner, Dorinda Cox, and Samantha Rowe MLC. Eight incredible organisations had stalls on the night with resources and information for all women. They also spoke about their organisations and the amazing work they do in the local community. The night featured performances from the neo-soul artist Princess Khanya as well as the popular and adored Stella Donnelly.

The group is now focusing on their next event for International Women's Day. The event will be held in collaboration with Amnesty UWA called 'Connect with AmnesTEA' - a morning of conversation, learning and networking. The event will feature a range of local inspiring, successful women, excelling in their field to share knowledge, build networks and inspire the future generation of young women.



WA's Women's Rights Group at their December meeting

YOUTH IN OUR MOVEMENT

As the first year of the new Youth Strategy, the year saw YAG working to embed youth and youth perspectives across the organisation. Q4 then brought a time of reflection for YAG to recognise the incredible spaces which are developing across the movement, and look to planning a 2021 which increased the capacity and opportunities for youth activists to be vibrant amongst this. Simultaneously, Q4 saw many youth activists mobilising to take action in various expressions. Below, just a few of these highlights of activism are mentioned:

- YAG led and organised two of the W4R nights within the 10 days of activism. Fin, alongside the LGBTQI+ Network, led a panel event with Melike and Özgür, the individuals Amnesty were campaigning for in the METU Pride case. The night was especially impactful after hearing from the human rights defenders themselves and was an incredible way to begin the 10 Days of action. Emily and Anita led night 7, youth rights. The night included a performance by Luka Lesson, who performed slam poetry in solidarity with Paing Phyo Min. The performance and discussion afterward was emblematic of the resistance and empowering nature of art, and sets precedent hopefully for Amnesty embracing more creative forms of activism.
- Bridget, a YAG representative, has been working alongside Rodney Dillon and Joel Mackay, to campaign for the compulsory introduction of Indigenous texts within high schools. The team created a petition, a letter for teacher endorsement and in December 2020, had a meeting with the Education Minister's senior advisor about the campaign.
- The Youth Leadership Committee, a program focused on creating genuine opportunities for under 18 activists, wrapped up for the year. The program provided two projects for activists, to either lead their own human rights conference or create human rights content with a youth lens. The evaluation of the project indicated the continued need for our investment in under 18 opportunities and creating ways for young people to shape their own activism. In light of this, we will be replicating the YLC model in every region throughout 2021.

As the few examples in Q4 show, there is an incredible youth movement currently at Amnesty, and excitingly, YAG will be working alongside this movement for youth activism in 2021. With the second year of youth strategy underway, we're looking forward to the transformative work to come!

MEMBERSHIP & GOVERNANCE

The beginning of quarter 4 saw us collating the input and survey results of the vision consultation section addressing the membership product.

The remainder of the quarter was primarily focused on delivering a very large calling program to sort out membership data issues around lapsed memberships and membership payments. There were about 350 calls made with follow up emails and letters sent as well.

2020 Q4 data	QLD / NNSW	NSW	ACT / SNSW	VIC	TAS	SA / NT	WA	National Q4	National Q3
No. of groups (total)	19	29	10	24	6	11	14	127	122
No. of activists (total)	128	387	137	154	46	85	88	1025	1106
- Engaged level	49	242	84	59	18	29	39	520	612
- Committed level	52	103	35	65	19	32	23	329	350
- Core level	27	42	18	30	9	24	26	176	144
No. of members (total)	615	1459	367	1501	181	432	372	4927	5390

Key takeaways:

Going well / On track

Q4 demonstrated a lot of activist energy with many groups being able to return to face to face campaigning. At the same time, activists have demonstrated that they have increasing confidence with adapting to COVID circumstances e.g. by using Zoom and QR codes.

In September the Activist Skills Collective recruited 3 leaders and 5 Skills Facilitators to form a national team who will lead and support activist skills development. In October the Skills Facilitators wrote 2 workshops and then delivered them via Zoom. We are well on track to delivering a range of fundamental activism skills via a range of delivery methods in 2021 based on surveying activists and staff at the end of 2020.

The Activist Communications team is in the process of recruiting several new roles to increase the capacity of the team, and to empower activist communications across the regions. Amongst these are a media-specific role to strengthen our presence in the regional media space, and regional communications representatives to sit across ALCs, who will play an integral role in ensuring regional activism is visible.

Our 2020 Write for Rights strategy was designed and led by our newly minted Activist Campaign Strategy team. This team successfully ran our 10 Days of Activism virtual events, which attracted hundreds of attendees nationwide. These events enabled local groups or ALCs to play a leading part in a national initiative. A great example of how national moments can be distributed!

Areas to improve

We have to recognise that both activist numbers and member numbers are down this quarter. E.g. While Q4 has demonstrated a small growth in group numbers we acknowledge a drop in both our active members and activists. The membership drop was expected due to data issues (see more above). However, the drop in activists will need to be investigated more and in coming quarters we need to collectively consider how to grow and retain our movement. Amnesty's 60th Birthday on 28 May could be an important opportunity to do this.

Our ALCs are vital regional leadership bodies - they play a critical role in connecting our regional activists and action groups. Our priority in the next quarter will be to increase their numbers and capacity through nominations, elections, and a tailored training program.

We are working to improve the campaign strategy and design process after the success of the W4R campaign strategy, to ensure activists are included at the conception and for the duration of campaign strategy development.

We are looking to further embed our Brand proposition, Challenge Injustice, into all of our communications, and to ensure that activists feel comfortable implementing the brand narrative when they represent Amnesty. We are looking to cement this understanding by rolling out more brand training throughout the year.

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 & 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 1 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.



NSW school groups gathering to discuss Write for Rights