

# THE GRASSROOTS REPORT

2021 Quarter 2: April, May, June



This quarterly report is an overview of Amnesty's National Organising Program which is sent to leaders and staff. It shows how we are 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:

- Share some National Highlights from our Movement Manager
- Share Regional Highlights from this Quarter
- Share Activist Updates
- Share Membership Updates from Quarter 2

If you have any questions or comments please contact the Organising Team at [communityorganising@amnesty.org.au](mailto:communityorganising@amnesty.org.au)

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# NATIONAL HIGHLIGHTS

I am writing this in the midst of another round of lockdowns spanning across the country that has of course again impacted on our spirits, our health and our activism. I hope that you and your loved ones are safe and well. I think that it goes without saying that activism in the midst of a global pandemic is tough. Yet we have continued to stand strong and adapt to changing contexts and landscapes. We have continued to raise our voices, demonstrate our power and come together where we have been able. I am in awe of all of you. Thank you all for your continued passion, reliance and tenacity.

In spite of this context we have still done a staggering amount of work and made significant human rights impact.

Our Refugee rights work has been a significant focus for the last quarter as we worked to build momentum towards Refugee Week. And whilst Refugee Week itself was fraught with complexities in changing restrictions our movement has continued to build solid momentum over this quarter to ending offshore processing.

In the coming weeks we will hit the eight-year anniversary of the deliberate system of abuse that has seen thousands of adults and children who have fled their homes in search of safety trapped in this cruelty.

Over 1000 people today remain in transitory limbo because of Australia's detention regime, with 233 still trapped in offshore detention (125 on PNG and 108 on Nauru). Together this quarter we have tweeted, held vigils, online and offline events and called MPs. Thanks to all of you we have made our voices loud and clear. It's time to end this cruelty and bring these people to safety. Keep up this momentum over the next quarter and together we will end this system of abuse.

It is this powerful and important work of amazing activists like you that makes me deeply proud to be part of this movement.

Thank you for your continued dedication and passion for human rights. I look forward to hitting the streets with all of you sometime in the very near future.

Movement Manager  
Sarah Gooderham



# ACT/SNSW REGIONAL HIGHLIGHTS

The ACT and Southern NSW region has been heavily involved in reactive work, and building connections within our community.

We kicked off the quarter by supporting the Palestinian community in a candlelight vigil, and called on the government to do more to prevent human rights violations in Palestine.

We attended the launch of a Practical Guide to Law and Protests in the ACT, where we reignited some old partnerships - exciting news to come in future reports!

The ACT government announced that it will be examining anti-discriminations laws to better protect trans, gender diverse and intersex people's rights. Amnesty activists are currently working to get some core issues on the agenda for this reform.

The regional groups have been continuing their great work. The Bay and Basin Group commemorated Sorry Day at the Bomaderry Aboriginal Children's home - the place where the local members of the Stolen Generation were taken. They were welcomed in the spirit of love, unity and hope for a future of true reconciliation.

The Wagga Wagga group continues to write letters monthly, and engage in refugee work. They recently hosted a 60th Birthday Event, and attended the events in Canberra!

To celebrate Amnesty International's 60th birthday we focussed on what makes us as a movement strong, and really went back to our roots. The region got together to host a social change workshop, including presentations from activists, sharing experiences, strategic thinking, and critical conversation training.

After the social change workshop, we all got together to celebrate with our community at a variety show themed 'Persist and Resist, a joyful resistance'.

We brought together musicians, poets, and speakers in the Human Rights space, including our very own activists, to celebrate our achievements, highlight core campaigns, and set the tone for the future of our movement in the region.

Most recently activists have been busy calling on the government to call for an end to offshore detention, and a pathway for refugees in 'limbo' to rebuild their lives. We have also attended and supported vigils for the Biloela family.

Actions around Myanmar have continued with Amnesty speaking at multiple rallies this quarter. Work has begun to co-design some activism training with the Myanmar diaspora in Canberra.

The ACT Government released its discussion paper on Raising the minimum age of criminal responsibility recently. The ALC are working on a submission with core activists.

Our ALC welcomes 6 new members: Jay Moran, Stephen Rowe, Alicia Zahmel, Joe Guarneri, Saad Khalid, and Geoffrey O'Keefe. We are excited to come together and support the work of our activists, community, support new groups and be involved in campaigns.

Kathryn Allan (ACT/SNSW President)  
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# WA REGIONAL HIGHLIGHTS

The highlight of our year so far has been the Amnesty 60th birthday celebrations. What an opportunity to reflect on and acknowledge the ongoing work of millions of ordinary people standing up for justice, freedom and equality for all! With ALC member Brett Osler on board, we pulled off two highly successful events. The first was an Exhibition at the Perth Town Hall, drawing on Amnesty's rich history, its iconic campaigns, its successes and its persistence and resilience that is demonstrated through those campaigns.

Shine On, was a celebration of lighting the darkness, and we painted Perth and other regional centres in Amnesty yellow light! Historic sites around Perth, Fremantle, the City of Albany, Kalgoorlie and Broome were lit up and those organisations also promoted Amnesty's birthday on their social media platforms.

At the local level, the Mount Lawley Group also celebrated Amnesty's birthday through its traditional letter writing, dinner and a toast to freedom. Local MP Simon Millman attended to cut the cake and reminisce on Peter Benenson's article in 1961 on the forgotten prisoners.

WA's Youth Action Plan in WA, developed in collaboration with youth activists and youth leaders Euan and Tara on the WA ALC, laid the groundwork for a seamless activist pathway for young people from high school through to uni & beyond. Over the past months there has been increasing collaboration and innovation between the Schools Group and University Groups.

The WA Schools Group, which developed educational resources during the lockdowns, has been inundated with requests for workshops following one teacher placing the group contact on a WA Humanities Teacher's page.

With the support of new member Ashra Anver, we rebuilt the Refugee Rights group. It now has eight core members, and has just recently held its first event, a highly successful vigil for Refugee Week. The vigil was held at sunset in Fremantle, and was supported by the Fremantle Amnesty Action Group and partner organisations including Students for Refugees, RRAN, and the City of Fremantle, a Welcome Refugee Zone. Activist Singer, Dawn Barrington provided a background of inspirational songs to this wonderful event.

The Margaret River Group held a #gameover photoshoot for Refugee Week, another wonderful example of deep community engagement and media presence!

And finally we would like to congratulate Libby Williams on being awarded the national June Fassina Award for outstanding and meritorious contribution to Amnesty over many decades! A wonderful recognition of her leadership and activism.

Leonie Alexander (WA President)  
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# VIC REGIONAL HIGHLIGHTS

Since our last update Victoria entered its fourth lockdown on 27 May, the day before our 60th Birthday, with restriction easing after three weeks. Our 1406 members and 25 groups have remained committed and engaged despite changing restrictions and rolling lockdowns.

## 60th Birthday

Despite the lockdown some celebrations took place. The Castlemaine Group held their birthday event on 13 May which was featured in the local paper.

The Ballarat group postponed their event, holding their birthday celebrations on 26 June.

The Activism and Leadership Committee are actively working to re-organise the Birthday Party event once restrictions are further eased. They have commissioned special 60th birthday t-shirts, which ALC Secretary, Clive Weston arranged and personally couriered to regional Victorian groups with other birthday supplies.

## Refugee Week

The Bendigo group held a Candlelight Vigil at Rosalind Park during the weekend of 26 June. The Refugee Network now has 15 new members, plus two new conveners, thanks to the hard work of staff Ashra Anver and Margherita Mezzasoma. They will be holding a candlelight vigil on 19 July 2021 at the Park Hotel.

## Activism and Leadership Committee

Following our 2021 elections, the Victorian Activism and Leadership Committee is currently the largest it has been in the last five years, with eight members including the newly elected Gracie Corcoran, Fiona Bachmann and Emily Watson, our first YAG representative.

Our other fantastic members include Andrew Liew, Chanphyna Bou, Susanna Ritchie, and Clive Weston (Secretary).

## Activism Innovation and Events

The Women's Rights Defenders Network held a Recruitment Session and Pizza Party in April 2021. The Amnesty Yackandandah group held an information stall and second handbook sale to fundraise on 12 June on the High Street Yackandandah.

The Nunawading and South Eastern groups held a talk on the situation in Turkey at St Stephen and St Mary's Parish Centre on 15 June.

The LGBTIQ+ Network attended the Better Together Conference National LGBTIQ+ Rights Conference in June via zoom with other national activists. They also successfully recruited their first social media officer.

Our Pop Culture Network has begun preparing for the 2021 Oz Comic Con.

I would like to thank all our Victorian Activists and Members for their continued support and positivity throughout this year.

Suzan Gencay (VIC President)  
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# QLD & NNSW REGIONAL HIGHLIGHTS

Loads of going in Queensland and Northern New South Wales. We welcome Ruth Gould, Olivia Roney, Gavin Cruikshank and Meg Fetzgerald to our ALC and Famnesty.

The ALC hosted Activist Skill Share training session and catch up that spanned from 1pm-4pm on the 29th and 30th May. Twenty attendees joined sessions on various subjects our activists had selected, all with a refugee rights angle. The feedback was super positive with great interaction, engagement and take home learnings from some awesome guest speakers and fellow activists.

The Lismore group continues to hold weekly vigils for refugees while the Gold Coast group has hosted a few events. On June 22nd the GC group hosted a "Release Biloela and all Refugees" vigil that attracted 50+ attendees. They also celebrated Amnesty's 60th birthday with a successful face to face event with several special guest speakers including Mario Santos, Chair of Amnesty International Australia's Board who zoomed in, and Aunty Pat a local Gold Coast Indigenous elder.

The Chermside group supported refugees and people seeking asylum by attending the Palm Sunday rally in Brisbane, vigils for Priya, Nades, Kopika and Tharnicaa and joining with Brisbane City group to hold a vigil for Refugee Week outside Home Affairs. A relatively new Chermside member joined the National Amnesty Refugee Network and took on the role of updating us at our monthly meetings on current refugee news.

For Volunteer Week we posted Q&As of our long-term volunteers on Facebook. One of our members made a submission to the QLD Government about the recently tightened bail laws affecting Indigenous young people.

Further north the Toowoomba group held a Film Night under their "Movies That Matter" partnership with St James Anglican Parish. The film was Scattered People and the group rallied over fifty attendees. The group raised \$355.00 which was donated to a local refugee support agency.

The Townsville Group hosted a three day art exhibition featuring artists from Magnetic Island who produced very powerful human rights statements through their art. The art work was on sale and 25% of proceeds went to Amnesty International Australia. Julian Assange spent his early childhood years on the island and the islanders regard Julian as one of their own.

Each year the Townsville Amnesty group sponsor the Human Rights Songwriting Competition at the Palm Creek Folk Festival held this year from 9-12 June. The photo shows winner of this year's competition, Rob Nixon, with KC the winner of the general songwriting composition. Runners-up were Ernie Teresina and Michael Oster.

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# SA & NT REGIONAL HIGHLIGHTS

There was a significant change in the composition of the SANT ALC over the last quarter with new faces, skills and experience ready to strengthen activism in the region and deliver human rights impact.

In May, the region organised a 60th Birthday celebration at Arthur Art Bar in the Adelaide CBD as a chance for past, present and future activists to network with one another, as well as with other partners and allies of AIA.

Tim Green (SA & NT President)  
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# TAS REGIONAL HIGHLIGHTS

With the State elections upcoming, the TAS ALC advanced on getting political support for 'raising the age' campaign, which included getting the commitment on national TV from both leaders of the Labor and Liberal parties, and from many other political candidates.

Work is being undertaken to coordinate with the Southern Group in the hope to follow up on those commitments with a meeting with the Attorney General, Elise Archer.

A New University of Tasmania group network has been started with events to commence in Semester 2. Southern Group was a finalist in the ABC Community Spirit Awards as well.

A brochure was designed and printed in acknowledgment of the 60th celebration of Amnesty and new Activist T-shirts were designed and printed.

Human Right's Day event in Franklin was also a screening of 'Nur Speaks Out' and a Q&A in December 2020 - 140 people attended. Greg Luckman was MC, Rodney Dillon, Tim McCormack, Refugee Arad Nik, Musicians and a poet. There was also a Turkish feast.

Peter Jones spoke at the Julian Assange Rally and we had a big Amnesty presence there. Peter Jones will be speaking at another rally as the AGM is held, being Assange's 50th birthday. Amnesty supported Rodney's Invasion Day Vigil in Cygnet. Really beautiful.

We collected over 200 petition signatures for the Julian Assange campaign. The Tas Refugee Team Honk-a-thons keep up their regular monthly vigil in Hobart.

Tas Refugee Team supports Refugee Arad Nik in his weekly vigil outside Department of Home Affairs office.

The Southern Group organised the 60th birthday event in Cygnet on the 28th May with the Commissioner for Children and Young People as

Keynote Speaker, Leanne McLean. Tasmanian Children's Chorale and lots of musical entertainment from school children and local adults. About 200 people attended.

Rodney Dillon also gave Welcome to Country and speech on Raising the Age. Southern Group convener met with Senator Meg Webb about Raising the Age.

There was also the 60th anniversary birthday stall in Launceston at the harvest market.

Amnesty had a petition stall at the screening of 'Scattered People' last week in Franklin. Letter-writing campaign (led by Greg Luckman) and win (for now) with the Anti-Protest Law.

Rick Rolls and Hobart's Letter-Writing Group attended Amnesty events in Franklin and Cygnet. They continue with regular monthly letter-writing meetings and are really inspiring.

Planned event for July at Hobart Town Hall with Jane Caro as Keynote Speaker.

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# NSW REGIONAL HIGHLIGHTS

During Quarter 2 2021, NSW groups have been focussed on Amnesty's 60th Birthday celebrations, Refugee Week, the campaign for the Biloela family plus a number of film screenings and other events. Wollongong Group held a screening of 'Brazen Hussies' in April which was also a fundraiser, plus a celebration of Amnesty's 60th birthday at their May letter-writing event.

Manly Amnesty Group held a 60th Birthday Party and used the occasion to honour a couple of their long time members, screen a short film, toast human rights and enjoy some excellent home made food.

Coffs Coast group continue to produce a local Coffs Coast monthly newsletter and conducted an information stall at the Coffs Harbourside Markets.

The Forest Group gained two new members which has broadened their discussions and increased the number of letters they write each meeting. At their last meeting, they raised a glass to celebrate the 60th anniversary of Amnesty International and recognise the significant role Amnesty International has played in challenging injustice over the last six decades. Over the past few months, they have been particularly involved in building community pressure to advocate for the return of the Murugappan family to Biloela on a permanent basis.

The Avalon Group has been meeting with recently released asylum seekers and community members to offer support. Group members also visited Barrenjoey High School and addressed the school on human rights issues.

Mudgee group has been very active, with two new people having joined the group. They held a 60th anniversary celebration with a former Amnesty activism coordinator as the guest speaker. Over 50 people attended the 60th anniversary event and 35 stayed on for dinner. The group succeeded in getting a page two story in the local paper and a segment on local breakfast radio prior to the event. The Mudgee group has continued their twice-weekly letter writing sessions.

The group has sent off just over 600 letters this year, mostly Urgent Actions and also some Australian Indigenous rights and refugee-related letters.

The group is in the early stages of planning a screening of "I Am Greta" in late August. They are particularly hopeful of attracting lots of young people to this.

Eastern Suburbs group in conjunction with previous members of the Randwick group, celebrated the 60th birthday of Amnesty International with cakes and a toast to freedom. They have also been writing letters and supporting the Cranbrook School Amnesty Club which is very active.

Newcastle group has been working on various refugee campaigns including the Biloela family. They collaborated with other refugee advocacy groups to run a Newcastle Refugee Week opening event focusing on refugee stories. They have been working with four high schools to create a mural on the themes of social justice, human rights and the environment, and they are working with five high schools to develop and deliver an Amnesty Schools Conference in August for 400 high school students.

The NSW ALC has been working on identifying new potential members for local groups, providing regular campaign updates to Convenors, revising the Convenors Guide and developing other resources for Convenors

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# ACTIVIST HIGHLIGHTS

## YOUTH IN OUR MOVEMENT

The second quarter of the year was huge for our Youth Advisory Group (YAG), recruiting brand new members across the country. Many of our new YAG members have also been successfully nominated onto their local [Activism Leadership Committees](#). The new representatives bring a wealth of diverse experiences and we are incredibly excited for all the new initiatives and developments they will bring!

New YAG members are currently finalising their projects and areas of focus on how they're going to contribute and progress key deliverables of the [National Youth Strategy](#). The key focuses of these projects will be to diversify our modes of activism and be shaped by the various experiences and interests of our YAG members. The projects will be published to the movement soon with empowering new initiatives to come.

Learn more about our new YAG recruits on our [Youth In Our Movement Page](#).

### [Youth Strategy Update](#)

YAG have released a report outlining the key successes and progress of the National Youth Strategy". You can read all about this here with key highlights of Youth activism across the country.

### [The launch of Anytime, Amnesty!](#)

Anytime, Amnesty is a special four-part series from our Youth Advisory Group (YAG), that delves into human rights issues across the globe. Hosts Fin Spalding and Anita Nair, bring you the stories of people who are on the front lines and also offer advice on how you can create change. So far, over 50% of listeners are aged between 18-27, successfully engaging a younger audience and hopefully inspiring them to join our movement.

Listen to Anytime, Amnesty: [here!](#)

You can also find a link to the podcast and other youth resources via:

<https://www.amnesty.org.au/youth-resources/>

### [Celebrating Regional Youth Activist Successes](#)

The NSW Schools team, convened by Rhea and Louise, have started the second Youth Leadership Committee program!

Starting as a trial in 2020 to see how we can create spaces for under 18 activists outside of schools, the program received amazing feedback and now is back again in 2021! The YLC has two main streams, a youth inclusion project and a human rights conference project - and is a program emblematic of the incredible and inspiring work of youth activists. Looking forward to all the initiatives to come! Want to know more, email the team at [nswschools@amnesty.org.au](mailto:nswschools@amnesty.org.au)

As always, please contact yag via [yag@amnesty.org.au](mailto:yag@amnesty.org.au) for all things Youth in our movement.

## DIVERSITY, INCLUSION & WELLBEING

Together we are on a journey to be a more diverse, inclusive, and safe movement so that we can be more effective in defending human rights.

Last year, we asked our movement to reimagine Amnesty International Australia and what we heard has been captured in our new Diversity, Inclusion and Wellbeing Action Plan.

Read and share our Diversity Inclusion and Wellbeing Action Plan [here](#)

We all have a vital role to play to ensure our events and groups are accessible and inclusive. In future grassroots reports we will report back on the progress made.

# MEMBERSHIP & GOVERNANCE UPDATES

Work has begun on revitalising Amnesty International Australia’s membership program, most notably with the recruitment of the Membership Engagement Officer, Aden Kenworthy and Naomi Adeyanju as the Membership Coordinator. These two roles will be working together to improve the product of membership and boost overall growth and retention of members.

A working group has also been formed to begin working on new ideas for the program.

Currently, membership numbers are sitting at 5,131.

## QUARTER 2 DATA: APRIL - JUNE 2021

|                             | ACT/<br>SNSW | NSW  | QLD/<br>NNSW | SA/NT | TAS | VIC  | WA  | NA                        | National<br>Q2 | National Q1                          |
|-----------------------------|--------------|------|--------------|-------|-----|------|-----|---------------------------|----------------|--------------------------------------|
| No. groups (total)          | 11           | 27   | 22           | 17    | 7   | 25   | 15  | 2<br>(National)<br>3 (NA) | 129            | 127                                  |
| No. Activists (total)       | 129          | 362  | 118          | 80    | 45  | 146  | 78  | 134                       | 1092           | 1118                                 |
| Engaged                     | 32           | 87   | 49           | 29    | 18  | 61   | 19  | 42                        | 587            | 601                                  |
| Committed                   | 81           | 236  | 45           | 27    | 16  | 55   | 37  | 90                        | 351            | 352                                  |
| Core                        | 16           | 39   | 24           | 24    | 11  | 30   | 22  | 2                         | 168            | 165                                  |
| No. Members (total)         | 388          | 1549 | 649          | 458   | 159 | 1405 | 385 | 138                       | 5131           | 5049                                 |
| <u>Urgent Action totals</u> |              |      |              |       |     |      |     |                           |                | 648 (+1501 un-reported last quarter) |
|                             | 75           | 296  | 83           |       |     | 56   | 283 |                           | 2272           |                                      |

# KEY TAKEAWAYS

## GOING WELL / ON TRACK

- Our Activist Communications Team members and Regional Communications representatives have now all received logins and training in BBIS, our email platform. This will enable more peer-to-peer communication between activists within their own regions- which we have learnt is one of our most successful forms of communication.
- Our Activist Skills Collective has recruited 6 new Skills Facilitators who were onboarded and inducted into their new roles. They are now going through the Train-the-Trainer program to prepare them to work with ALCs on up-skilling and regional training program scoping.
- YAG have successfully recruited and achieved regional representation across the country
- A huge nominations period saw many ALCs have contested elections. Our ALCs are now flourishing with new and long standing Amnesty activists. You can meet your local ALCs [here!](#)
- Our 60th Anniversary was celebrated by the movement with over 20 registered events across the country. It was so inspiring to see such a range of events and activities.

## AREAS TO IMPROVE

- Now that we have a full Activist Communications team and regional spread of Regional Communications representatives, we would love to see even more engagement with regional communications, including emails, event promotions, and regional media engagement. Contact the team at [activist.communications@amnesty.org.au](mailto:activist.communications@amnesty.org.au) or via the [ACT brief](#) to find out more.
- YAG will be looking to open recruitment up in WA and VIC soon to increase Youth leadership across the country. Applications open soon- so stay tuned
- YAG is looking to integrate more across the country, working with ALC's and youth leaders to improve ways of working. Over the next quarter YAG will improve gaps, communication and processes across the country to ensure growth of our youth movement and genuine participation opportunities for young people within Amnesty
- We have seen improvement in our Urgent Actions reporting numbers across the country. This was thanks to an initiative suggested by the Western Suburbs group (WA) to more consistently track the scope of Urgent Actions across the country. However, there is an opportunity now to better integrate the way we report these as currently we are using two methods. Our National Urgent Actions volunteer, Rob, is investigating to ensure more consistency in Urgent Actions tracking.

# KEY DATES & UPCOMING OPPORTUNITIES

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| JULY   | AUGUST  | SEPTEMBER  |
|--|---|--|
| 4th - 11th: NAIDOC Week: Heal Country                      | 2nd: Quarterly Movement Webinar                           | 1st: Wattle Day                                  |
| 12th Get Active: Intro to Activism at Amnesty              | 4th: Indigenous Children's Day                            | 2nd: Know Your Rights and Claim Them Book Launch |
| 14th: Non Binary People's Day                              | 5th: Submissions due for ACT Raise the Age (ACT Only)     | 13th: Get Active" Intro to Activism              |
| 19th: 8 Years Too Long - Anniversary of Offshore Detention | 9th: Get Active - Intro to Activism at Amnesty            | 15th: International Day of Democracy             |
| 24th: NSW Convener Catch Up                                | 12th: International Youth Day                             | 21st: International Day of Peace                 |
| 28th: 70 Years Refugee Convention                          | 17th: Diversity, Inclusion, Wellbeing Action Plan Webinar | 24th: Bisexual Awareness/Visibility Day          |
|  | 27th: Wear It Purple Day                                  |  |
|  | 20 Year Anniversary of Tampa                              |  |

[Click to view the Activist Planner](#)

## KEEP CONNECTED

Keep connected with our [National Facebook Group](#) for activists. The perfect place to 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.