

The Grassroots Report

Quarter 2 & 3 2022 | April – September



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Dear fellow activists,

Welcome to our new format Grassroots Report. We hope that you will find it informative and useful in your role as activist leaders.

The Activism and Membership Committee (AMC) works closely with the Movement Team to grow AIA's supporter base, empowering activists and enriching the participation of all AIA's members and supporters in taking action and in participating in the life of the movement.

The members of the AMC are Carol King (Deputy Chair and ALC appointed), Cassandra Seery (board director), Katrina North (ALC appointed), Leonie Alexander (ALC appointed), Jillian LaBruzzo (ALC appointed), Camille Furtado (board appointed) and Abbey Marler (YAG Chair) and myself, Saras Kumar (AMC Chair and board director).

There have been many events, actions, and successes that you can read about in the regional and national reports, with LGBTQIA+ rights being challenged, particularly in sports. This quarter we witnessed the Manly Sea Eagles struggle with team division that publicly played out when players refused to take the field and wear rainbow-themed jerseys. Jerseys that were meant to promote inclusion but instead showed how far there is still to go to build human rights in sport.

Our NSW LGBTQIA+ Network quickly mobilised a Snap Action: "Making a rainbow at 4 Pines Park", The Network handed out hundreds of rainbow Amnesty badges to people arriving at the Manly vs Roosters NRL game.

Whilst this reality played out in Manly we continued to expand our relationship with the Mustangs Ice Hockey team and this quarter we hosted our fourth ice hockey pride game. These games matter because they build inclusion and safety. On the field and on the rink people have the right to feel that they are safe to be who they are and to participate in the sport they love. We build people power not just to win campaigns but to build agency and to drive a shift in attitude and behaviour within our country. The Mustangs have worked shoulder to shoulder with us making that commitment to their players and their fans to learn and to exhibit pride in the diversity of their community.

The next quarter will be focused on Write for Rights (W4R) with a primary focus on its links with our global flagship campaign: Protect the Protest. All our W4R cases are protest-related and we have incentivised activists to host their own events and use the common thread of protecting protesters to advocate and generate visibility for all of our 10 cases. On top of that, we have just launched our first national action on Raise the Age (RTP) with a pledge that people can take to protect protest.

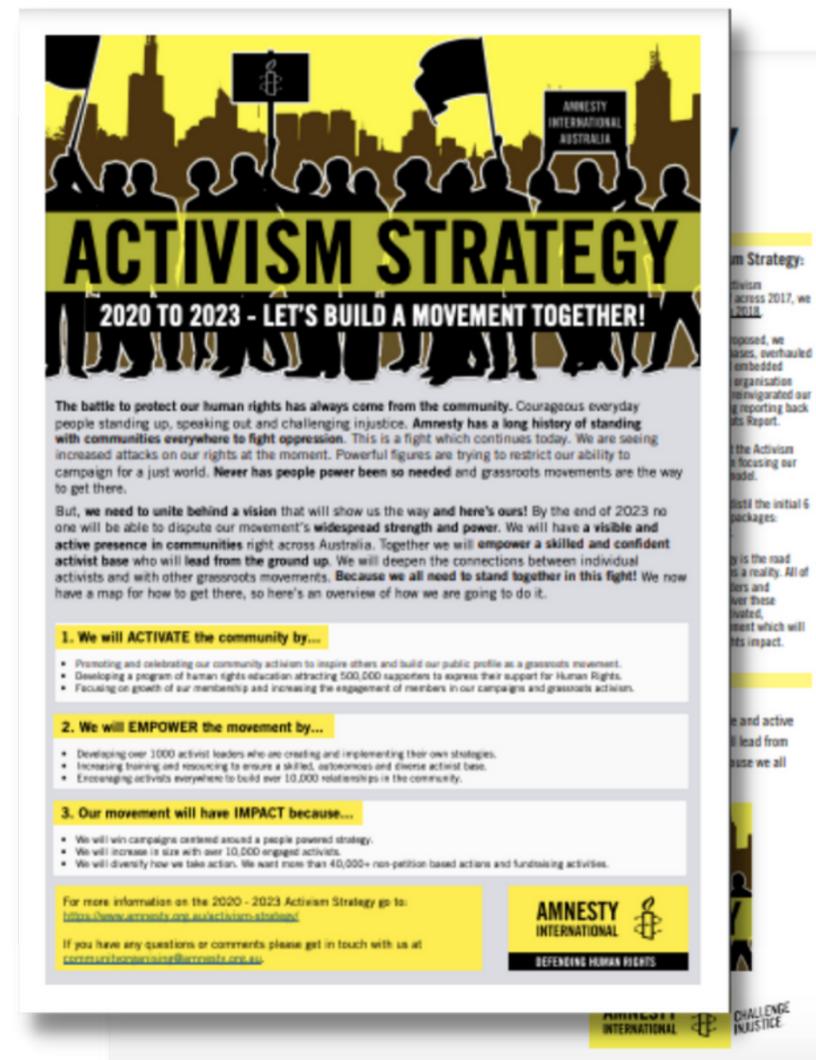
NATIONAL HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE ACTIVISM & MEMBERSHIP COMMITTEE

Further, alongside the usual W4R activities, we will spend the remaining of the year upskilling and briefing Activism Leadership Committees (ALCs) and their activists in the region on the state of protest in their states, and a few regions will start working on a plan for AIA to be involved and add value to the protest movement (whether that is by starting up human rights observers or amplifying partner's call or any other activities that ALCs and activists will scope). Nationally we have also started setting up a coalition of organisations and civil society groups that are heavily involved and invested in the right to protest space; we have kicked this off with a partnered event in Sydney on the 4th of October. We are hoping to capitalise some attention for a mobilisation across the country on the 10th of December, human rights day, and to develop this in collaboration with activists.

In Iran right now we are watching a primary example of why the right to protest has and must be protected. Protests have been taking place right across the country sparked by the death in custody of 22-year-old Kurdish woman, Mahsa Amini, who had been detained by the morality police for wearing her hijab in an "improper" way under oppressive forced veiling laws. Gunfire has been unleashed on protesters which has left at least eight people dead and hundreds injured. Iranian security forces are violently quashing largely peaceful protests sparked by Mahsa Amini's death. Our researchers have also collected evidence on the security forces' unlawful use of birdshot and other metal pellets, teargas, water cannon, and beatings with batons to disperse protesters.

Throughout history, protest has been a powerful tool for change. We must protect the protest wherever it is restricted, whenever it is at risk. The people of Iran must be able to seek justice for the death of Mahsa Amini and to voice their displeasure and upset at laws that violate human rights and demand change.

Click to view:
[Activism Strategy.](#)
[Activism Strategy KPIs.](#)



NATIONAL HIGHLIGHTS

ACT / SNSW

Winter is cold in Canberra, so many of our activists take leave during this time to travel to warmer places. And yet, we kicked goals

An absolute highlight was a rally outside of parliament house, that brought together 1,500 people from across Australia to stand for Freedom in Iran. Amnesty ACT/SNSW contributed to all event logistics, the media release, media liaison, AFP liaison, and inviting MPs. We had a long list of MPs/Senators attend from across the political spectrum, including key independents. We also had a private meeting with the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Minister for Women, which Amnesty ACT/SNSW attended as support.

There was substantial media coverage from all major networks (as pictured).



We have also supported a smaller action for the Day of Action for Iran, and run a planning workshop with the Iranian community on how to progress this campaign.

Our feminist network is up and running. It partnered with the Zam Zam Foundation to run a moving event to mark the one-year anniversary of the Taliban taking over Kabul. It was a powerful vigil, attended by around 80 people, with speakers from across the diaspora, and local MPs including the ACT's Minister for Women, and the ACT's Minister for Human Rights, as well as other supporting MLAs.

In the ACT, our partners at Change the Record had a major win in the Raise the Age Campaign. The ACT Government has committed to drafting legislation raising the age to 12 in early 2023, and then to age 14 two years later. This was part of a compromise between ALP and the Greens. ACT/SNSW had written submissions, and met with the Chief of Staff to the Chief Minister, as well as the Chief Legal Advisor to the Chief Minister, in advance of this. In the next quarter, our wonderful ALC member Vaishnavi will be focused on banning spit hoods and strip searches, as there are tangible campaigns to win here. We have a meeting planned with our ACT Human Rights Minister next quarter to progress these issues (as well as the Rights to Remedy campaign), and will be activating our supporters to write letters, make calls, and keep up the pressure.

We also submitted a fantastic submission into the rights of the environment, led by the incredible Sally.

The fantastic Joe has been working on the human rights act campaign federally, and he will be running a town hall in the ACT which will occur in the next quarter.

On refugee rights, Christian partnered with the Bintumani veterans to run a soccer tournament as part of the My New Neighbour campaign.

We have established a working relationship between ACT/SNSW and our colleagues in the NSW Branch, to talk about how to activate our regional SNSW groups on the election campaign.

Our wonderful Amnesty ANU group has also been reinvigorated after a hiatus and has been planning action days and petition days at ANU. Stephen has been working really well with our groups, and it's paying off!

NATIONAL HIGHLIGHTS

VIC

The Victorian Activism and Leadership Committee partnered with the Victorian Aboriginal Legal Service (VALS) in the lead-up to the Victorian Election on 26 November 2022 to campaign for them to raise the age of criminal responsibility to at least 14 years of age.

On 10 August 2022 we launched the campaign with a panel discussion at the Library at The Dock featuring Nerita Waight, VALS CEO, Julia Breheny, Principal Managing Lawyer of Balit Ngulu VALS, and Mario Santos, Chair of the Amnesty International Australia Board. Susanna Ritchie VALC member moderated. Over 40 people attended and participated in a lively q&a. This event was also the launch of our Activist Tool which allows Victorian activists to email both their current members of parliament and candidates about raising the age which was kindly designed by staff - [Email Your Candidate: Commit to Raising the Age to 14 | Raise the Age to 14: Victorian State Elections \(good.do\)](#).

On Thursday the 15th of September we hosted a Raise the Age webinar featuring Sam Klintworth AIA National Director, Maggie Munn AIA Indigenous Rights Lead Campaigner, and Negar Panahi VALS Senior Lawyer. The session was moderated by Anoushka Jeronimus West Justice Youth Law Director. Speakers discussed why we need to raise the age of criminal responsibility and invest in community-led solutions. Auslan interpreters were also available.



Click to view the [Webinar Raise The Age webinar - Victorian Election 2022 \(includes Auslan interpreters\)](#) - [YouTube](#).

As part of our campaign, we are also providing bespoke strategic conversation training for our activists. This training takes an hour and a half and focuses on how our activists can effectively engage with Parliamentarians and Candidates about this issue.



NATIONAL HIGHLIGHTS

VIC

On 25 July 2022 the North East Metro Group, Nillumbik Reconciliation Group, and 'Do justice' Group St Margaret's Church held a Truth Telling event with the First Peoples Assembly of Victoria Members and Amnesty International Australia. Speakers –Andrew Gardner, Trevor Gallagher, and Cassandra Seery, National Board member of Amnesty International Australia.

On 6 August 2022, the Victorian LGBTIQA+ Network hosted a stall at the first Drag Expo and collected over 650 signatures.



On 7 August 2022 the Victorian LGBTIQA+ Network, several activists (including several VALC members), and staff attended the Puck Homophobia pride match at the O'Brien Ice-House with our Melbourne Mustangs victorious.

Activists also hosted a stall at the Pride Cup on 17 September 2022.

On 17 September 2022, the Pop Culture Network hosted its first-ever stall at the Crunchy Roll (Anime) Expo.

From August 2022 the Bendigo Group started hosting a monthly letter-writing event at the Bendigo Library on the first of the



NATIONAL HIGHLIGHTS

NSW

Over the last six months, the NSW ALC ran a hybrid (f2f and Zoom) Social Change Lab for Convenors and lead activists which focussed on skills training and the Human Rights Act campaign in NSW; undertook the Calling Program; provided Convenors with campaign updates and new resources, and undertook planning for the NSW portion of the Human Rights Act campaign.

Local groups have been active in a range of activities including:

- Mudgee group held a fund-raising garage sale which raised \$4000, continued their regular fortnightly letter writing, and held a film screening of *Breaking Boundaries: The Science of Our Planet* (featuring David Attenborough) followed by a panel of 3 speakers addressing a range of climate action measures
- Wollongong group held an online screening of *Freedom Street* and ran a letter-writing event
- Avalon group held a music concert to raise funds and collect petition signatures
- Newcastle group ran an Amnesty Student Leadership Conference in partnership with Waratah High School with four other high schools attending
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NATIONAL HIGHLIGHTS

SA / NT

Thursday the 29th of Sept we had the joy to host an Afghan Film Fundraiser screening "The Dark Future" with the Afghan Culture Association of South Australia and raised over \$1100 for Amnesty International Australia and the In Need Foundation. The night was enriched with a theatre piece by the local Afghan community, a fashion show, speakers, and delicious food.

South Australia has developed a new Action Group, Adelaide for Assange, that focused on Julian Assange's extradition and other issues for free speech and whistleblowers. They have been meeting every Tuesday in protest in front of Penny Wong's office.

With newly formed ties with the Adelaide local Iranian community, we have been co-hosting protests for Masha Amini and the Freedom of Iran. Saturday the 1st of October, thousands took to the streets in a peaceful protest.

Earlier in the year SA/NT partnered with Charles Darwin University (CDU) with hosting some Social Work Student placements. After three successful placements in the NT, we have just onboarded two new SA students to work closely with the ALC and other action groups for their time.

As always the Darwin Group has been rallying weekly in front of Don Dale. They held their Democracy Dash which was another successful event of Darwin Amnesty that happened on 20 September 2022. 11 groups of school students participated in the second Darwin Democracy Dash.

The drawing group hosted a film night screening the award-winning 'Geeta' followed by a Q&A with Writer/Director/Producer - Emma Macey-Storch, Co-Producer - Dipanjali Rao, and hosted by local filmmaker Naina Sen.



ACTIVIST COMMUNICATIONS TEAM

The **Activist Communications Team** has had a busy and productive few quarters supporting dozens of grassroots events and campaigns.

On a regular basis, supporters and staff members submit information about local and national events, campaigns, and human rights wins through our website. Our online [Content Brief](#) page provides the opportunity for activists to request support with communications and local event promotions, such as targeted activist emails, social media events, graphics, and digital content creation.

This year, we supported Raise the Age, local film screenings, activist get-togethers, and campaign webinars, as well as many other inspiring events.

Every month, our tireless Editor-in-Chief, Mikaela, has created the People Powered Bulletin to highlight the activities of Amnesty International and the strength of our grassroots movement.

Grace, our Content Creator, developed attractive and informative digital and promotional content for dissemination nation-wide. The design of the Grassroots Report showcases Grace's talent and dedication.

We also managed the [Amnesty International Australia: National Group for Activists Facebook page](#), where members come together to post human rights content, news and events to start discussions with other supporters across Australia.

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Our diverse team remains committed to supporting grassroots activism, and our people powered movement. [Click here](#) to submit requests, and our dedicated team will promptly provide support with your communication needs.

NATIONAL REFUGEE NETWORK

The National Amnesty Refugee Network (NARN) has been actively engaged with a number of refugee campaigns, including Offshore and Onshore detention, refugee resettlement, Game Over, Time for A Home, My New Neighbour, Biloela family, Afghanistan, Ukraine, Strengthening the Character Test Bill, individual cases in prolonged detention, and more recently, Evacuate PNG and Nauru and Raise the Humanitarian Intake.

Significant events have included Palm Sunday, a national refugee webinar Fair Go for Refugees: Australia can do better in partnership with ARAN, and Refugee Week.

NARN hosted a series of Refugee Strategy Development Meetings, which were open to the whole refugee sector and resulted in the development of some new strategies and tactics.

In April, we saw six major wins:

1. Australian-NZ Resettlement Agreement
2. UNHCR-NZ process to resettle refugees from PNG
3. 'Strengthening the Character Test' Bill failed to pass the Senate
4. A series of releases of refugees and asylum seekers from locked detention in Australia
5. 16,500 true additional humanitarian places for those fleeing the Taliban
6. The release of the remaining men from the Park Hotel and the other hotel prisons around Australia

The May election brought a change in the Federal government with the promise of a more humane approach to refugees and asylum seekers. In August, this was evidenced by the granting of permanent residency visas to the Biloela family - a huge and symbolic victory.

After many years of advocacy, it has been heartening to see a significant change in Federal Government policy, a change in media coverage of refugee issues, and a shift in community sentiment toward more humane treatment of refugees.

A SNAPSHOT OF OUR MOVEMENT:

Data from the last 6 months
(Quarter 2 and 3)

		WA	SANT	QLDNNSW	NSW	ACTSNSW	VIC	TAS	No Region / National
Activate	Membership number total per region (TOTAL: 4897)	377	444	645	1473	362	1360	182	54
	Membership sign ups (new members)	Annual: 8	Annual: 18	Annual: 7	Annual: 25	Annual: 1	Annual: 22	Annual: 2	Annual: 5
		Auto-renewal: 29	Auto-renewal: 18	Auto-renewal: 31	Auto-renewal: 72	Auto-renewal: 5	Auto-renewal: 53	Auto-renewal: 13	Auto-renewal: 6
	Membership sign ups (new Youth Members)	2		5	4		4		
Empower	Core Activists	26	27	28	42	21	32	11	
	Committed Activists	35	41	63	101	37	65	19	
	Engaged Activists	241	441	535	854	112	440	111	
	Number of groups / networks	16	8	20	28	10	22	6	21
	Number of GetActive attendees	3 (0 new)	0	2 (1 new)	11 (3 new)	2 (1 new)	8 (1 new)	1 (0 new)	1
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number that are brand new to AIA 								
Number of activists recruited through volunteer positions	7	8	3	1	1	7		7	
Impact	Non-petition based actions (And a percentage of this of total actions) – online and offline	4543	2982	9,196	11,090	1,786	6,256	1,386	7,705
	Number of Activist Events	9	30	21	25	10	23	3	

KEEP CONNECTED

Keep connected with our National Facebook Group for activists. The perfect place to stay connected to your Amnesty peers.



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[Click to View the Activist Planner](#)

