

# The Grassroots Report

Q4 2022 / Q1 2023: October – March



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# NATIONAL HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE ACTIVISM & MEMBERSHIP COMMITTEE

This report is unlike any other as it not only looks back at the past six months, but also reflects on our entire activism strategy that concluded in the first quarter of this year. We know it has been a difficult time, with two out of three years severely affected by COVID-19 and the lingering impacts of lockdowns and isolation from family, colleagues and friends. Yet, in spite of it all, we refused to give up on our mission to advance human rights and build people power. We're proud to report that despite the obstacles, together we achieved some significant wins in strengthening and diversifying our human rights movement! We launched free youth membership for 16 and 17-year-olds, and the response was overwhelming! We exceeded our goal by recruiting 170 youth members and counting.

Our network of activists collaborated to find new and creative ways to challenge injustice, with over 100 groups and 600 leaders meeting regularly across Australia. We have also seen a growth in national campaigns and skill-based networks such as the National Refugee Network, Feminist Network, Activist Comms team, and Photography Network. When our movement is connected to one another, strategically working towards change and sustainable in our activism we achieve great things.

Together our movement has fiercely defended human rights and contributed to significant improvements both domestically and globally. Some key outcomes you have helped to ensure over the last 3 years include:

- Defending against the religious discrimination bill
- Three state governments commit to Raise the Age of criminal responsibility
- The federal government finally accepted New Zealand's long-standing offer of resettling refugees trapped in Australia's cruel offshore detention regime
- The Australian government abolished the Temporary Protection Visas, which denied refugees access to family reunion, education and healthcare.
- Real progress for individuals at risk like Nazanin Zagari-Ratcliffe, Bernardo Caal Xol, Yulia Tsvetkova and countless others

In these last 6 months particularly we have seen our movement come together to participate in Write for Rights. I've been inspired to see the activity across the country to campaign for 10 courageous individuals at risk. We saw 34 in-person activist events and 7 staff-led events, including the campaign launch, school pack launch, four "Disrupting the Space" actions, and the Asia Pacific Activist Gathering.

Last week, the ACT/SNSW Activism Leadership Committee, in collaboration with Australia Hong Kong Link and support from staff, organised a media stunt for Chow Hang-Tung outside the Chinese embassy. Participants wore masks of Chow's face, held up protest signs, and handed over all your petitions for Chow's petition.

On behalf of the Activism and Membership Committee we are truly inspired by the strength and resilience of our human rights community, and we can't wait to see what we achieve together this year! In the coming months we will be launching our new People Powered Strategy and we look forward to working with every person in our movement to bring it to life. I want to end by thanking the 14 people - staff, activists and people with lived experience - who were part of this design group.

Thank you for critically thinking about how we are going to best achieve human rights impact and thanks to all the activists who have participated in the consultation process. It's been an exciting undertaking to have a genuine co-designed strategy and we look forward to sharing it with you all and implementing it together.





# NATIONAL HIGHLIGHTS

## ACT / SNSW

I acknowledge the resilience of a the ACT/SNSW ALC for keeping their committing to achieving human rights goals in a very challenging year. The team successfully organized a W4R demonstration at the Chinese Embassy. The ALC supported the first ever public rally for the Tibet community in Garema place. Joe Guarnieri spoke on behalf of the ACT/SNSW ALC. The importance of the UDHR in Tibet and its relevance in advancing human rights in authoritarian regimes was highlighted.

There was representation from the Uyghur community, Taiwanese community, Greens MLA Andrew Braddock and representatives from the ACT and national Tibetan community. The ALC spoke about the need for the Australian government to recognize the future incarnation of the Dalai Lama chosen by Tibetans under the principles of Tibetan Buddhist Traditions.

The ALC also mentioned the hacking of Amnesty International Canada's computers by the CCP. The ALC maintains an engaged relationship with the Tibetan Community. The ALC has also taken proactive steps in building a relationship with the Hong Kong community. The ALC attended a documentary screening which follows the pro-democracy movement in Hong Kong.

The ALC continues to maintain a collaborative relationship with the Iranian community, supporting them during solidarity marches to advocate for women's rights and the expansion of civic space.

A big aspect to highlight is the need for all to stand together as a powerful voice against human rights violations taking place in many countries including Australia resulting in the suffering and death of many people fighting for civil liberties and fundamental freedoms. Amnesty feminist network has also forged strategic partnerships with the zamzam foundation and actively participated in the palm sunday rally. The ALC is in a mode of restructuring and is progressively aligning with its regional goals . Following the regional planning meeting, the ALC has re-engaged diaspora communities in an intentional and collaborative spirit in promoting human rights wherever they occur.





# NATIONAL HIGHLIGHTS

## VIC

It has been a very busy time for Victoria. We are proud of the partnerships we brokered and the work we have been able to do with like minded organisations.

On 25 November 2022 in partnership with the AsiaLink Foundation we held the first Youth Social Change Lab at Melbourne University for 16 and 17 year olds. Sam Klintworth (AIA National Director) was a keynote speaker. The day included "How to be an Activist Training" run by staff and three Human Rights Deep Dive sessions: Climate Justice, Indigenous Rights and LGBTIQ+ Rights. Each session included a panel of speakers including Lucy Kenny (AIA campaigner) and Gavin Choong (AIA Youth Advisory Group Member); as well as representatives from the Victorian Pride Lobby, Switchboard Victoria and Koori Youth Council.

Over 50 students and their teachers attended. Everyone received a goody bag of information and teachers also received a compendium. On 27 November the Hills Group held a fantastic "Afternoon of Human Rights Fundraiser" featuring a performance by the Aqua Moon Fusion Belly Dance Troop and a small concert from Suzette Herft.

On 7 December 2022 we end our Write for Rights: Right to Protest Event in partnership with the Melbourne Activist Legal Support (MALS) who presented on the Right to Protest whilst attendees signed actions and letters for our individuals at risk. Afterwards we celebrated another wonderful year at the Grace Darling Hotel.

The Bendigo Group continued to hold a monthly Letter Writing event at the Bendigo Library. Attendees at each session regularly sign petitions, actions and letters aimed at the governments of up to 10 countries.

We also concluded a year long campaign to Raise the Age of Criminal Responsibility in partnership with the Victorian Aboriginal Legal Service (VALS). With staff support a tool was created to e-mail candidates and members of parliament in the lead up to the election. 273 email actions were taken, resulting in the equivalent of over 4000 emails being sent to candidates and MPs. 46 people attended the person campaign launch and panel discussion on 10 August and 193 attendees came to the zoom panel discussion on 15 September. Another 151 people have watched this session since on YouTube. VALS kindly invited us to attend the first ever screening of Incarceration Nation at Parliament House on 23 March 2023.

On 22 January 2023 the Victorian LGBTIQ+ Network hosted very successful stall at Midsumma Carnival resulting in hundreds of petition signatures. The VALC has said goodbye to the following members including Grace Corcoran, Andrew Liew, Chanphyna Bou and Tom Jessup. We are so thankful for their contributions to the Committee and to our Victorian Movement. We would also like to acknowledge the contributions of staff many of whom made the above work possible, specifically Marjon Hilhorst, Margherita Mezzasoma, Jarrod Tan and Brenna McNeil.



On 22 January 2023 the Victorian LGBTIQ+ Network hosted very successful stall at Midsumma Carnival resulting in hundreds of petition signatures.



On 5 February 2023 the Victorian LGBTIQ+ Network, staff and VALC Members marched in Pride.



On 18 March 2023 in partnership with MALS we held a Right to Protest: Presentation and Sign Making Workshop. Attendees made signs for the Walk for Justice for Refugees on 2 April 2023 with the new Victorian Refugee Rights Network Co-Convenor Pip.

# NATIONAL HIGHLIGHTS

## NSW

Over the six month period Oct 2022 to Mar 2023, highlights for the NSW ALC and groups have been:

- The ALC planned and implemented a regional campaign for a Human Rights Act for NSW utilising our network of local action groups. It was particularly important to seize the opportunity presented by the NSW State election on March 25 2023. The campaign involved meetings with both sitting MPs and candidates, letters to MPs and candidates, a petition, letters to the editor, and social media promotion. Meetings with key MPs were very positive and, given the change of Government in NSW, means there is a very good chance of getting a Human Rights Act for NSW legislated in the first term of the new parliament.
- The ALC has developed a model for greater involvement with the implementation of campaigns in our region. This has been developed in collaboration with activists, the Movement Team and the Impact team. We are already putting this into practice.
- The ALC continued to develop new practical resources for Convenors and activists including film screening resources, event resources and, in collaboration with the Supporter Care Team, a comprehensive listing of the materials and equipment that are available from Action Centres to support events. We have made all of our resources available to Convenors and activists nationally.

Local groups have been active in a wide variety of ways including:

- Wollongong with meeting MPs, letters to MPs and Senators, a submission to a Senate Inquiry, letters to the editor, and Write for Rights
- Mudgee with fortnightly letter writing producing a huge number of letters to MPs and for Urgent Actions
- Eastern Suburbs initiated a Climate Justice project involving the development of workshops for high schools on climate justice with a focus on the Uncle Paul and Uncle Pabai Climate legal challenge
- Newcastle has continued its engagement with local schools and student social justice and activism groups
- NSW LGBTQIA+ network was even busier than usual this year with both World Pride and the Sydney Mardi Gras
- A number of groups ran very successful fundraising events including Avalon, Mudgee and Wollongong groups



# NATIONAL HIGHLIGHTS

## SA / NT

Thoughts from the Queer Action Group

- The positive engagement with our event at Feast and movie night were massive highlights for us (I believe some photos have been submitted).
- We're also proud of the progress we're making (slowly) on the SOGICE campaign - a long and challenging campaign which was bolstered by our presence at the Better Together Conference.
- Promotion of our events and growing our groups capacity continues to be a challenge, but we have been able to discuss these challenges as a group and are starting to implement plans to address these issues.

# NATIONAL HIGHLIGHTS

## QLD /NNSW

2023 kicked off a bang in QLD/NNSW with activists across the region hitting the ground running. We launched a new group in the region and are proud to present our 2025 Vision Working Group who found success and joy in working the markets with a' write, draw & Read for Human Rights. The stall is designed to be kid-friendly where one member of the group reads Human Rights related books and does drawings with the kids while another member chats with the adults regarding all things Amnesty.

The group already has six strong members and we're looking forward to seeing their work as the year unfolds. The Gold Coast Group, among many in the region, attended an Invasion Day rally and held an International Women's Day event.

The Redlands Group continue with their letter writing and has been gaining petitions on various Amnesty campaigns. In Chermside the magnificent Tash has stepped into the Convenor role and is being supported by Frances. The Townsville crew ran their annual Palm Sunday Rally and screened a successful session of the Franklin documentary attracting 100 attendees – gooooo Townsville! The group plans to follow up with the attendees and invite them to future meetings and events growing their contact list exponentially.

The group also secure the tour of "The Long Way Home" art exhibition about the story of the struggle of the Nadelaingam family and the #Home to Bilo group to avoid deportation to Sri Lanka. Reach out to the ALC if you're interested in hosting the exhibition.

Additionally a couple of ALC members organised a meeting in Brisbane with Graham Perrett, a Federal MP in Brisbane's south, attended by Zoom with other members of the ALC and an activist from Chermside group. The purpose was to advocate for the refugees left out of the recent changes by the Government including the people stranded on Nauru and in PNG and others in the community ineligible for permanent visas.

We have several members & lead activists in the region working on the Human Rights Act for Queensland along with growing community partnerships in the Indigenous rights space in the Brisbane area promoting support of Community is Everything. The ALC is currently in a requirement period and hoping to recruit a couple of activists to join us in leading activism in the region. With a focus on youth activism and membership, we will continue to plan our next Amnesty Schools Conference to be held in August 2023. Returning ALC member Bronwen has been working on our member platform for the region and it's coming along nicely so watch this space and a big thank you to Bronwen.



# ACTIVIST COMMUNICATIONS TEAM

The Activist Communications Team has had a busy and productive quarter 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 [Activist Brief](#). Our 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.

Grace, our National Asset Manager, continues to design attractive graphics and provide digital content creation upon request for activists nation-wide. The design of the Grassroots Report showcases Grace's talent and dedication.

Mikaela, our Editor-in-Chief, continues to collate, edit and build the monthly People Powered Bulletin. Our team has also continued supporting, building, and sending newsletters in three regions, while also building dozens of activist emails nation-wide. Write for Rights was a particularly busy time for us, where we built over a dozen emails for activists holding events. Activists reported back that after sending emails to local supporters they had five times the number of attendees than in past years!

Our Social Media Specialist, June, created Write For Rights centred content for the National Page For Activists on Facebook, to increase participation and awareness of the campaign. She continues to moderate the page, and post updates about human rights events in Australia and newsworthy stories worldwide. If you aren't already a member, please follow our page, to join other Amnesty International supporters across Australia to post human rights content, news, and events. Many volunteer opportunities, as well as activist-led digital campaigns and interest groups, post updates on the page, so it's a great place to join focus groups, begin discussions, and come together with like-minded activists nation-wide.

Our diverse team remains committed to supporting grassroots activism and our people powered movement. Please visit our website, if you'd like to learn more about who we are and what we do. [Click here](#) to submit requests, and our dedicated team will promptly provide support with your communication needs.

# NATIONAL REFUGEE NETWORK

The network has been busy during this period with activities including:

- Campaigning for the Australian Government to Raise the Refugee and Humanitarian Intake
- Campaigning for Permanent Visas for all Refugees and supporting refugee-led protests for this
- Campaigning on bringing all refugees and asylum seekers from Nauru and PNG to Australia, including:
  - Writing submissions to the Senate Inquiry for the Evacuate to Safety Bill
  - Creating an activist led working group for this campaign

Significant wins on refugee issues have included:

- The Minister for Immigration, Andrew Giles, granting the Nadesalingam (Biloela) family permanent visas so that they can remain in Australia
- Resettlement to New Zealand commencing
- The release of more than 300 refugees from long term Immigration Detention into the community
- The announcement by Minister Giles that the 19,000 refugees in limbo on temporary protection visas are now able to apply for permanent visas and remain in Australia
- Transfer of seriously ill refugees and asylum seekers on Nauru to Australia for medical treatment
- Reversal of Ministerial Directions 80 and 83 – which had meant that refugees on permanent visas were denied the opportunity of family reunion

# NATIONAL RAINBOW NETWORK

The last six months were positively massive for the National Rainbow Network, encompassing South Australia's Feast Festival and Better Together Conference, Victoria's Midsumma Festival, and Sydney WorldPride and Mardi Gras in New South Wales. Amongst events and visible presences at each of these incredible, and in the case of WorldPride, once-in-a-generation, festivals, the National Network still found capacity to work closely with staff on the launch of AIA's Rainbow Ally Guide and lay plans for a big 2023.

Building the network's capacity continues to be a challenge as we emerge from Covid with smaller groups and less states involved in the Network. Nonetheless, our core group of committed activists continues to do amazing work, even if we can't quite get to everything that we would like to. Our connections with organisations and activists beyond the network have proved crucial in ensuring we can react to current events.

Amid a global surge in anti-trans voices, and violence against queer activists, our work has become slightly riskier than previously. Nonetheless, we have considerable momentum in pursuing our existing campaigns, with nationwide movement on the SOGICE campaign, and have plenty of plans in the works to grow our network and our movement.



# A SNAPSHOT OF OUR MOVEMENT:

Data from the last 6 months  
October 2022 – March 2023

		WA	SANT	QLDNNSW	NSW	ACTSNSW	VIC	TAS
Activate	Membership number total per region	404	444	672	1553	373	1442	189
	Membership sign ups (new members)	49	31	97	199	41	109	23
	Number of <b>new</b> members under 35	16	7	38	101	18	38	12
Empower	Number of Core Activists	32	37	33	48	26	35	15
	Number of Committed Activists	41	42	70	132	43	102	24
	Number of Engaged Activists	110	103	289	555	66	315	70
	Number of groups & networks	15	9	19	28	9	20	6
	Number of GetActive attendees* - Number that are brand new to AIA	2 1	2 1	5 1	5 1		8 3	1
Impact	Number of actions total	23283	18152	48812	75480	9528	60173	7477
	Non-petition based actions	657	550	1463	2705	536	1866	367

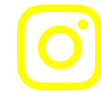
\*Two Get Actives were run in Q4 2022 and Q1 2023 - one in November and one in February

# 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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