



RECRUITMENT & RETENTION

Level 4: Leadership skills

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Amnesty International Australia - defending human rights

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**CHALLENGE
INJUSTICE.**

CONTENTS

1. Introduction
2. Recruitment
 - Getting ready to recruit
 - Recruitment tactics
 - Recruiting youth activists
 - Recruiting a new convenor
 - We're here to help!
 - Case Study: ANU Action Group
3. Retention
 - A warm welcome
 - Diversity and inclusion
 - Building relationships
 - Case Study: Mudgee Action Group
4. That's a Wrap



BEFORE WE BEGIN

If you haven't signed up to join our Movement yet, head over to the [Get Active](#) page.

You can find other modules on fundamental and advanced activist skills [here](#). We recommend getting familiar with these first if you are new to activism.

If you have any questions, please get in touch with the Community Organising and Engagement Team at activism@amnesty.org.au.

1 INTRODUCTION

Our power lies in our people. Amnesty International is a Movement of passionate grassroots activists who work at global, regional and local levels to protect and advance human rights. We know from experience that when thousands of people (voters, consumers, community members) come together they can pressure decision makers to listen and act. This is why we are always growing our Movement. Click [here](#) to learn more about our [Theory of Change](#).

While there are many different ways for people to get involved with our Movement, this guide focuses on recruiting and retaining members for your action group—both local and campaign-specific groups. People power is not just power in numbers. It is also power in community. Not only is it more fun to work in a group but group members can also support and mentor each other. Groups foster strong relationships which help people to commit to action. This is why action groups are critical to our Movement.

Employing best practices can significantly increase the rate at which new people join and stay in your action group. Recruitment and retention are interdependent. Without a carefully thought-out and well executed recruitment strategy, you won't have the numbers nor the right foundation to retain new members; if you don't invest in retention, you end up back at square one, continuously having to recruit new members. In this module, we cover some key best practices to keep in mind when developing your recruitment and retention plans.



Recruiting for a specific volunteer role? Check out our [Activist Guide for Recruiting Volunteers](#) for more information about our External Volunteer Process and recruiting once-off event volunteers.



2 RECRUITMENT

GETTING READY TO RECRUIT

Before actively engaging and recruiting new people it's essential to spend some time considering how they will add value to your group and vice versa. Recruiting simply to increase the membership of a group can miss the opportunity to meaningfully involve people in the Movement. Think about what new members would offer your action group. The box on the left lists some prompts.

People have different reasons for joining an action group. Often they are passionate about a particular human rights issue, like climate justice or refugee rights, and want to make a difference. Sometimes they have been personally impacted and join to fight for their rights or the rights of their community. People also join because they want to improve their skills, gain experience or because they are looking for a community of like-minded people.

What new members can offer your action group:

- A fresh perspective and passion
- New ideas / experience / skills
- Take pressure off you by taking on some of the responsibilities
- Help the group achieve its goals and/or create new goals
- Help to sustain the group
- Grow and strengthen our Movement
- Help build people power
- Help us win campaigns and human rights victories!



Self reflection:

Think back to your very first interaction with Amnesty—why did you join the Movement?

ACTIVITY



Before people make a commitment they want to know if they will make friends, what the benefit of joining is to them, what is expected of them if they join and if the work will be meaningful. We find that people do not join or return when these things are unclear to them. Before you start recruiting, think about how you would answer the questions in the table below.

PURPOSE

What drives your group? Describe your group's purpose in 1-3 sentences:

VALUES

As a group, what do you stand for? What shared values guide you as you work toward your goals? Why do you believe these values are important?

GOALS

What are your group's short-term and long-term goals? How are you planning to achieve these goals? What impact can people have by volunteering with your group?

OPERATIONS

How often does your group meet? How is the group structured? How do you make decisions as a group? How do you communicate?

NEEDS

Which skills are needed to achieve your group's goals? How many hours a week do group members need to commit to reach your goals?

SUPPORT

How are group members supported? Is there an onboarding process? Are there further training opportunities? Which valuable skills and knowledge will they gain if they join?

When these foundations have been established and your purpose and goals are clear, people understand what is expected of them if they join and what opportunities they can explore with your group.

**Self reflection:**

Is your action group ready to start recruiting? Do you have dedicated lead activists to see the process through? If not, consider a planning day with your action group!

RECRUITMENT TACTICS

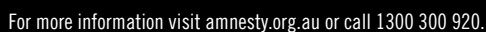
There is no secret or easy way to recruit new action group members; it requires time and dedication. To help you get started, we have compiled a list of tactics that you can use to attract new members. Choose at least three of these options and employ them regularly.

- ☐ Ask people in your networks. Friends and family members are the most likely to say yes to you.
- ☐ Events are a great way to reach new audiences. Are you holding events that attract people? Check out the [Events & Tactics Checklist](#) for tips and resources.
- ☐ Always have a sign up sheet at events and stalls (see page 6)!
- ☐ Follow-up: when someone expresses an interest, ask for their contact information and give them yours. Follow up with them as soon as possible, ideally within 48 hours. Call, email or text them and invite them to your next event or group meeting.
- ☐ Be visible in your community as an Amnesty group: regularly have stalls with Amnesty banners, wear Amnesty t-shirts, put up posters and distribute flyers (e.g. community noticeboards, cafes, libraries, letterbox drop). You can order Amnesty merchandise through the [Host an Event](#) form.
- ☐ Create public social media accounts and pages for your group so people can find you online (ie. Facebook page or group, Instagram Business account, or Twitter). Post when you have meetings and events and consider [boosting](#) the posts. You can find some templates for social media recruitment posts in [this folder](#).
- ☐ Promote your action group on the Amnesty website! All our groups are listed on the [Local Action Groups](#) page. Let the Organising team know if your group's contact or meeting details are no longer up-to-date!
- ☐ Take out an (ongoing) ad in your local paper and/or online noticeboard in the 'What's on' section.
- ☐ Send media releases to local media (print/online/community radio) to promote your group, members and events. Have a look at the ["How to engage with the media" skill up module](#) for tips and a template (page 6-7).
- ☐ Promote your group through word of mouth—upsell group membership to anyone interested in social justice.
- ☐ Get to know your local community: which groups and organisations can you partner with to reach a wider audience? Host events together and/or speak at events or meetings of other groups.

***Don't be apologetic: activism is an opportunity, not a favour.
When asking for commitment, be enthusiastic!***



ATTEND THE NEXT 'GET ACTIVE: INTRO TO ACTIVISM' WEBINAR





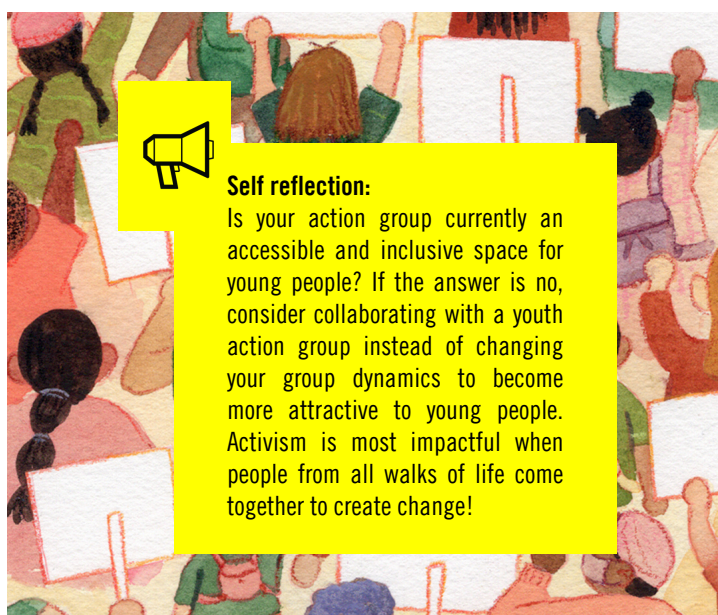
RECRUITING YOUTH ACTIVISTS

Young people are not just the leaders of tomorrow, they are the leaders of today. Did you know we have a Youth Advisory Group (YAG)? YAG is a group of youth activist leaders who are committed to improving the participation of young people in our Movement and developing new and inclusive approaches to youth activism. Head over to the [Youth in our Movement](#) page on our website to meet your regional YAG representatives and other youth lead activists. You can contact YAG by filling emailing them directly at amnesty.yag@gmail.com.

Human rights education (HRE) is a great approach to reach young people and inspire them to become activists. Reach out to a local school and ask them for the opportunity to speak about or run a workshop on human rights! If your group has the capacity, you could also organise a human rights themed school or youth conference. Conferences are great for peer-to-peer learning: they empower young people by giving them the opportunity to develop leadership skills while teaching each other about the importance of human rights and youth activism—an excellent example of youth leading youth! You can find youth and campaign resources on the [Activist Resources](#) page and Amnesty's [Human Rights Academy](#). Contact YAG if you need any further support!

Check the [Local Action Group](#) page to see if there is a school network or university group in your region. School and university groups have a quick turnover and members might be looking for a local action group after they graduate; a partnership could result in a steady influx of young group members. If there is no university group in your region, consider setting one up! You can also promote your action group to students by having a stall at O Week or other university events. The Organising team can also provide you with a list of schools which have been involved with Amnesty in the past and further HRE resources.

Under 25s are social media-savvy and spend a big part of their time online. Make sure your action group has an online presence so youth activists can find you!

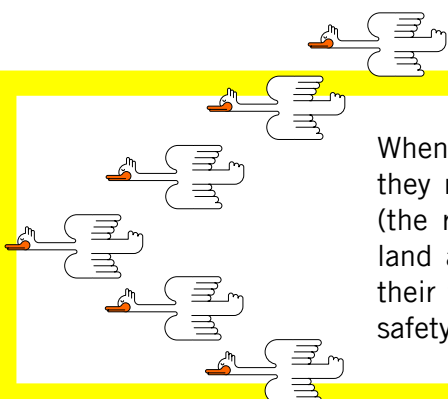




RECRUITING A NEW CONVENOR

Action groups generally have one or two convenors. A convenor is an activist leader within the group who organises and leads the meetings and mentors the group members. Groups can be structured in different ways but if you do rely on convenors, make sure you have a succession plan!

- Always have a co-convenor who is prepared to step up when the convenor steps down.
- Have an understanding of when members are planning to leave, so you can come up with a plan and start recruitment in time.
- Plant seeds early (if appropriate); be open about when leadership roles might be vacated so that other people in the group can start to think about that opportunity.
- Consider how to build leadership at every opportunity. For example, when planning for an event who is willing to play a part? How can you enable and empower group members to take on a leading role? Try to create a team with shared leadership.
- If none of the existing members of your group wish to step up into the convenor role, advertise the role within and outside the Movement (check 'We're here to help' below).
- If a convenor leaves and there is no immediate replacement, ask the convenor of a nearby group or a member of your regional Activism Leadership Committee (ALC) to cover your group until you've found a new convenor.
- If you can't find a new convenor and there is another action group closeby, consider merging the two!



When Canada geese are migrating, they take turns at the front of the V—they rotate being the leader (the weight-carrier) and being the follower (the rester). When a goose is injured during migration, two geese will land and stay with it until it is healed or dies and then catch up with their flock. Flocking is fundamentally about decentralising the effort for safety and trusting leadership to come from any edge of the flock.



Activists in Canberra taking action for Nassima al-Sada.

WE'RE HERE TO HELP!



ACTIVIST COMMUNICATIONS TEAM

activistcommunications.aia@gmail.com

Whether it's sending an email, creating social media content or preparing a media release, the Activist Communications Team (ACT) can help promote your action group and events to supporters and members in your area. The team consists of a graphic designer, social media specialist, regional media advisor, editor, event promoter and communications specialist. You can request support from any member of the ACT by completing and submitting [this brief](#).

REGIONAL ACTIVISM LEADERSHIP COMMITTEE

[CLICK HERE FOR MORE INFO](#)

Your regional ALC is your first point of contact for activism questions. ALC members can support your recruitment and retention efforts by sharing useful tools and resources and providing guidance as mentors. They can also put you in touch with other supporters, activists and members in your region or local area.



GET ACTIVE WEBINARS

We run regular [Get Active: Intro to Activism](#) webinars for people who express an interest in becoming an activist. We let attendees know about all the ways they can get involved, including joining their local action group. Make sure your group contact details are up-to-date on the [Local Action Groups](#) page so we are sending Get Active attendees in the right direction!

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT & ORGANISING TEAM

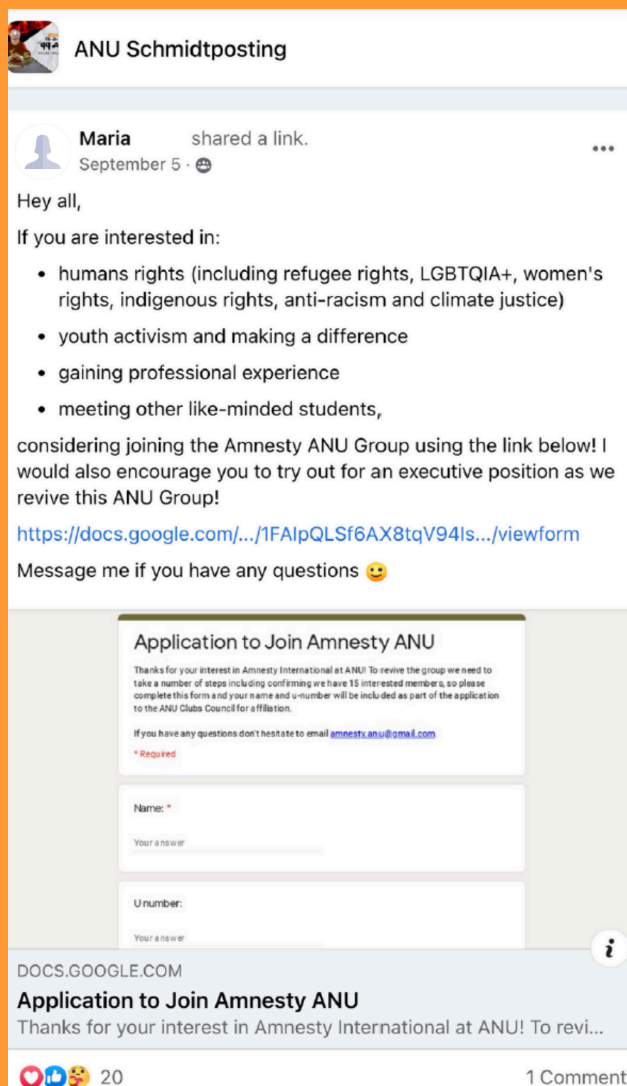
activism@amnesty.org.au

The CE&O team can help you develop a winning recruitment strategy and equip you with the tools and training you need to implement it. They can also support you when you are recruiting for a specific volunteer role (e.g. social media volunteer) by advertising it on the Amnesty website and/or external job websites, like Seek Volunteer. They are also the go-to team for all things donations, membership, events and merchandise. Request event funding and order Amnesty pens, t-shirts, stickers, badges and more through the [Host an Event Form](#).



CASE STUDY: AUSTRALIAN NATIONAL UNIVERSITY (ANU) ACTION GROUP

In 2021, during the height of the pandemic, the ACT/SNSW Activism Leadership Committee (ALC) revived the ANU Action Group. The group had become inactive after its executive members graduated. The ALC focused on building a foundation for the group—they chose not to link recruitment to a particular campaign. They started the recruitment process by gathering intelligence: they contacted previous members and accessed the group's old email subscriber list and Facebook group. They also reached out to the Organising Team for advice on starting a university action group and the contact details of past members from Amnesty's supporter database.



A big part of the process consisted of raising awareness of the ANU action group—making sure that students who are passionate about human rights and want to take action, know about the existence of the group and how they can join. The ALC promoted the group by emailing contacts, word-of-mouth, and posting on student forums and in social media groups. They created a Google form for people to express their interest in the group and its first event: the inaugural general meeting. Around 60 people signed up through the form; 20 people attended the AGM; and five contested committee positions were filled. After the AGM, the ACT/SNSW ALC handed the reins of the group over to the elected members.

Key learnings:

- Use your network! Start with people you know and work from there.
- Know your audience. Be mindful of student time tables and exam periods when planning events and actions.
- Be persistent and put in the time. Regularly check in with students that have expressed an interest.
- Direct outreach is better than indirect: while email and social media can be useful recruitment tools, nothing beats a call or face-to-face (or zoom-to-zoom) conversation.
- Be visible. Young people are excited and want to make a difference. You need to ensure they know about your group and how they can join and contribute.



3 RETENTION

Organizing is leadership that enables people to turn the resources they have into the power they need to make the change they want... it starts with people and relationships.

Quote from “Organizing: People, Power, Change”



Dedicating time and energy to recruitment is fruitless without also investing in retention. Retention is the long game. Once people start joining your action group, how do you maintain their involvement and sense of contribution?

The following is a list of the main reasons why activists do not return:

- They don't feel it is worth their time.
- The atmosphere is disorganised and they don't feel they're receiving attention or direction.
- No one explained why the work they are doing is important.
- They are uncomfortable doing what they have been asked to do.
- They feel overwhelmed by tasks and goals.
- The time commitment is bigger than they expected.
- The volunteer environment is unwelcoming.
- No one recognises their contribution.
- **No one asked them.**

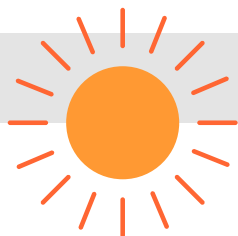
You can boost an activist's motivation and level of commitment by ticking these three boxes:

- ☐ **Meaningfulness,**
- ☐ **Responsibility**
- ☐ **Knowledge of results**

When an activist feels like their work is valuable and worthwhile, they are responsible for the work, and they understand how well they are performing, their activism experience is better and they are more likely to make a bigger and longer commitment.



Self reflection:
Consider your own activism journey. What made you stick around?



A WARM WELCOME

Whether a person expresses interest in joining your group at an event or they apply for an advertised position, it is important to have a meaningful journey planned out for them. The following practices help to create a welcoming environment for new activists so they are more likely to return!

- Thank new (and existing!) activists for their time and interest. It's awesome they want to challenge injustice!
- Introduce new activists to the group—make it warm, genuine and inclusive. Share your group's purpose and goals, plans, achievements and favourite activities.
- Have open conversations with new activists about their expectations and goals: where do they see themselves a year / five years from now? Provide support and opportunities to help them reach their goals. Remember, people come to Amnesty because they want to DO SOMETHING!
- **Confirm commitment: use a hard ask* and make sure your group members understand that you are counting on them.**
- Take an action during your meeting, e.g. write letters, sign a petition, make a plan. People enjoy a sense of instant achievement.
- Add new members to your group's email or contact list and social media pages. Make sure you keep all members informed about your group's plans, projects, events and achievements.
- Always schedule for the next time: don't let anyone leave without asking when they'll be coming back!



A hard ask is an ask that results in a commitment to a specific action. Use plain language, be specific and convey urgency. For example, "Can you come to our group meeting next Wednesday at the library?"



DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION

Are you providing a safe and inclusive space for a diverse range of people to engage with? Amnesty is committed to creating a diverse, inclusive, representative and culturally competent Movement. One of the ways we can ensure that all activists feel respected and valued is by using inclusive language. Read our [Inclusive Language and Events guide](#) and [Participation Protocol](#) to learn more.

Organizing is a fancy word for relationship-building.

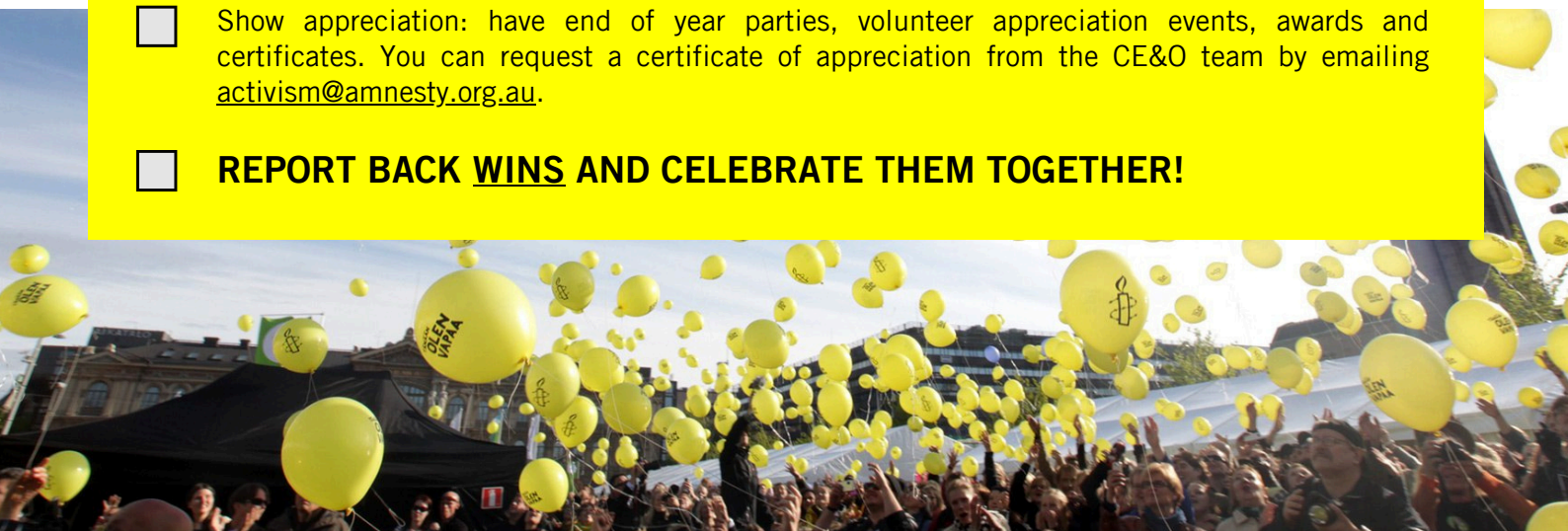
– Mary Beth Rogers

BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS

People come for the cause but they stay for the friendships. It is up to us to create welcoming spaces and engage activists so they keep coming back. This is where relational organising comes in: building intentional relationships to grow and strengthen our Movement. When activists have a resilient connection with Amnesty or someone from the Movement they stay active for many years.

Here are some ways you can foster strong relationships within your group and engage members long-term:

- ☐ Buddy new activists up with existing group members. The buddy can take the new member for tea or coffee to discuss their interests, skills and experience and provide guidance and support.
- ☐ Offer people real responsibilities; start by giving them a small but significant task and build it from there. For example, ask them to pick an urgent action or arrange refreshments for your next meeting / event.
- ☐ Leave room for passion projects. Be flexible with your group plans to allow members to work on campaigns and projects they care about.
- ☐ Encourage members to develop their skills and deepen their involvement in the Movement by:
 - Joining the [national Facebook group for activists](#), Amnesty's [Slack Workspace](#), and following Amnesty's national social media accounts;
 - Subscribing to Amnesty's activist newsletter, the People Powered Bulletin;
 - Completing [Skill Up training modules](#);
 - Attending workshops and training sessions;
 - Becoming an Amnesty member and attending the AGM.
- ☐ Let your members know about other teams and volunteer roles within the Movement. It is our job to engage people, build relationships and use what we learn about them to offer them opportunities that suit their skills and interests. You might welcome someone into your action group but realise over time that their skills, experience and vision are best suited for another group, like the Activist Skills Collective or your region's Activism Leadership Committee.
- ☐ Create social opportunities for activists to connect with each other, for example enjoy a meal together after meetings, events and actions.
- ☐ Show appreciation: have end of year parties, volunteer appreciation events, awards and certificates. You can request a certificate of appreciation from the CE&O team by emailing activism@amnesty.org.au.
- ☐ **REPORT BACK WINS AND CELEBRATE THEM TOGETHER!**



CASE STUDY: MUDGEES ACTION GROUP

The Mudgees Action Group is a local action group with ten committee members and over 130 email subscribers. It is one of Amnesty's most active and longest running groups—their members have been part of the Movement for decades. Convenor Heather attributes the group's success to the members' strong relationships and passion: "the social element is important but people are also very committed".



The members meet up at least once a week to write letters together. These regular meetings are a great opportunity to chat about campaigns and actions. The committee keeps the members on the email list up-to-date on group events and actions. They find that the best way to increase event attendance is to ask people directly. When restrictions limited in-person meetings, they stayed in touch via phone and video calls. They set up a buddy system for the committee members to look after each other. When a member doesn't show up to a meeting, their buddy checks in with them.

The group focuses on Amnesty's Refugee and Indigenous Rights campaigns but also takes action for other human rights issues based on members' interests and passions. They motivate each other by setting letter-writing targets. They started with a target of 500 letters a year in 2018 and have built this up to 1200 (!) letters in 2021.



4 THAT'S A WRAP



This concludes our module on recruitment and retention. We have explored why it is important to grow and strengthen our Movement, what are some key best practices when recruiting new activists and how we can retain activists and secure commitment to our human rights work.

Share your experiences with other groups and lead activists in the National Activist Facebook Group or in the #activist_updates channel in Slack—we can learn a lot from each other!

If you have any questions or would like further support, please do not hesitate to get in touch with the Organising team at activism@amnesty.org.au.