

## **To the Board of Amnesty International Australia:**

### **Regional Structures Review Working Group report back and recommendation.**

#### **The Background:**

In response to an AGM resolution that was passed at the 2024 AGM to evaluate AIA's regional model, a Working Group was formed through an open Expressions of Interest process. It included representatives from most regions:

Elsa Adshead (NT); Euan Gleeson=-Brown (WA); Silvia Greco (NSW)); Sarah Holloway (TAS); Carol King (NSW); Clive Weston (VIC); Staff Support: Amanda Atlee

The Working Group's task was to assess whether our current regional and ALC structures best achieve AIA's strategic goals under the People Powered Strategy and movement sustainability.

#### **The Resolution:**

Ordinary Resolution 2: Evaluation of the Regional-based structure

*To determine whether local branches continue to serve as the most efficient and effective means of achieving AIA's strategic objectives, which include facilitating democratic, member-driven decision-making and bolstering grassroots activism in Australia, THE AGM INSTRUCTS the Board to:*

*1. Conduct an evaluation of the Branch-based frameworks that AIA uses to manage its volunteer resources and governance structures; and*

*2. Assemble a comprehensive report for the 2025 AGM that:*

*2.1 Provides insights into the above issues, detailing the potential risk, benefits, strengths and vulnerabilities associated with the Branch model of volunteer organisation.*

*2.2 Explores viable alternative methods for mobilising our volunteer activist resources beyond the conventional state/branch/geographic model, and*

*2.3 Identifies any constitutional amendments and/or resolutions to be put forward by the Board to support identified improvements which better support AIA's members and structures for volunteer resources to be in line with the core People Powered Strategy.*

## **The Process:**

Phase 1: Feedback from past/current ALC members, Board members, and staff

- Engagements:
  - 1:1 interviews with current / past ALC and Board (~20)
  - Regional President & ALC meetings (~30 people)
  - YAG session (~10), Staff session (~10),
  - Online survey (~10 responses)

### *Insights and key themes from Phase 1*

1. Local Relationships Matter: Local action and knowledge are essential; national coordination must enable, not replace, this.
2. Regions Do Not Match Campaign Strategy: Current boundaries (e.g., SA/NT, QLD/NNSW) do not reflect political, geographic or demographic realities.
3. Lack of Clarity: Roles of ALCs unclear—governance vs. movement-building vs. campaign delivery.
4. Capacity & Burnout: Structure asks too much of too few. Volunteers are stretched beyond what the available support can fix.
5. One Size Does Not Fit All: A rigid model does not serve different regional needs. Greater flexibility is needed.
6. Vulnerability: Risk of manipulation through elections; unvetted individuals joining ALCs with personal agendas.
7. Staff Alignment and Support: Activist leaders are not always connected to the most relevant staff members, particularly those leading on specific campaign areas, making it harder to maintain strong, strategic links between regional activism and campaign priorities.

Phase 2: Broader Movement Feedback

- Engagements:
  - Movement Retreat (30 activists)
  - Adelaide Activist F2F (5 activists)
  - National Survey to members, supporters, and activists as part of Strategic Priorities consultation (1252 responses)

### *Insights and key themes from Phase 2*

1. Strong support for replacing current regions with state/territory-based structures better aligned with campaigning needs.
2. Strong support to move away from an election-based model with a preference to have an expressions of interest process which is reviewed based on skills and experience, while recognising that if we move to a non-election process, that safeguards must still exist in terms of onboarding leaders.
4. Three potential activist leadership areas emerged from the Movement Retreat and the Survey in particular:
  - a. Campaign Mobilisers – Regional leaders on campaigns to drive campaign strategy, provide information and drive action. Recognising this area is what attracts most people to Amnesty.
  - b. Movement Builders – People to support recruitment, onboarding, and connection across Amnesty activist networks. These would particularly support new emerging groups but also emerging activists to ensure they are connected and enabled.
  - c. Communications – this area seemed to span across both Amnesty spokespeople as well as behind the scenes communication support e.g., promoting groups / events, social media, and content creation.

These could exist within ALCs – in the regions in which they are active – or organically emerge as needed.

5. A strong desire for flexibility, adaptability and responsiveness to changing circumstances, strategies and campaigns is essential.

### **Final Recommendations to the Board**

The Working Group agreed on the following recommendations for reform to go towards the 2025 AGM:

#### **1. Removal from the AIA Constitution of Sections 14.2 – 14.12 referring to ALCs:**

The current Constitutional requirements and the responsibilities of ALCs are rigid, onerous, potentially unsustainable and may not be fit for purpose for smaller regions. The working group suggests that the ALC Charter be reviewed over the next 12 months, and over this time, we would also recommend trials of more organic leadership roles and structures that are fit for purpose in different contexts. These would be prioritised in regions where ALCs are not active, currently Tasmania and Western Australia.

- 2. Remove election requirements for activist structures:** The Movement will always need activist leaders; however, the current formalities are constraints, not enablers. The Working Group recommends the Movement adopt an Expressions of Interest approach to recruiting to activist structures while continuing to ensure that all members of such structures are financial members. This is already current practice in some regions with new ALC members being confirmed outside of the election cycle. It allows a more organic process of onboarding people who are inducted when they are interested.
- 3. Reduce minimum numbers required for regional leadership structures** from 5 to 2 which would ensure such structures are more stable and can continue their important work even if there are fewer people involved. Feedback received by the Working Group shows that it is not only important that we remove the barriers to participation, but also the barriers to stopping participation faced by ALC members under the current rigid requirements. In doing so, we hope that more people rather than fewer will be attracted to joining leadership structures.

## **Conclusion:**

The Working Group has identified the sections of the Constitution that we feel need removal and reform, but we have not identified what, if anything, should replace them, nor the specific leadership structures required. It is crucial to avoid unintended consequences that may be associated with inserting new references regarding leadership structures into the Constitution. However, we feel confident that removing the rigidity in our current Constitution will open opportunities to explore alternative models. We note that there are flow on considerations and impacts for regions especially in relation to regional budgets and the election of General Meeting Voters that the Board must resolve, and that both further work and testing are needed to fully realise a new structure that is inclusive, flexible, and sustainable.

Consequently, the Working Group will propose an Ordinary Resolution to the 2025 AGM calling on the Board to remove Sections 14.2 – 14.12, and to set strategic direction by way of such committees and leadership structures as will support AIA's People Powered Strategy and the sustainability of activism across the Movement.