

# February 2022: Issue of the Month: ALP Refugee Policy

Supported by ARAN, RAR, G4R, and NARN

Available to download at: https://www.ruralaustraliansforrefugees.org.au/rar-groups/online-group/



Included in this kit is the information you need to create your own letters:

- Background notes prepared by ARAN's Letter Writing Network.
- A proforma letter to personalise and send to your local ALP Senators and Members of the House of Representatives.

#### Personalised letters are best -

• You might like to use the AIDA principle

- **A Attention** grab the recipient's attention. Say something positive about the reader that is directed towards the focus of your letter. Stimulate the recipient's curiosity
- I Interest & Information- encourage the recipient to read on.
- **D Desire** Getting the reader to want to do what you are seeking in their interest to do so.
- $\circ~$  A Action- inform the reader of the action you want them to take.

Regards, The ARAN Letter Writing Network austrefugeenetwork@gmail.com

## Why write to ALP MPs and Senators?

The ALP policy on refugees is much more focussed on refugee rights than the current government policy. However, unfortunately, when last in government, Labor's treatment of refugees was not fully aligned with their policy platform.

We are suggesting people write to ALP politicians to make sure they know that we expect them to hold to their policy platform if elected to government.

# **BACKGROUND INFORMATION:** ALP Refugee Policy 2022

It is time to re-balance Australia's refugee policy and move from our present security-focused, punitive approach back to a protection-centred and rights-based approach.

It is encouraging to see the ALP's proposed reforms (pp123-128 of <u>ALP National Platform 2021</u> to refugee policy as endorsed by the ALP conference in March 2021.

- The introduction of mandatory immigration detention by the Keating government in 1992, and further changes to Australia's refugee policy over the ensuing years, have left us with a situation in Australia in 2022 in which we have tens of thousands of refugees and people seeking asylum trapped within the system with no permanent resettlement option.
- Australia's treatment of refugees under recent governments has become a very harsh, punitive regime, and is in breach of our international obligations. Widespread abuse and neglect within the detention system have been reported and substantiated in many reviews (conducted by both the Australian government and external organisations such as the UNHCR and Amnesty International) in recent years.
- Great damage has been done to many of the people held in immigration detention, especially those in the offshore facilities. The harsh conditions, long-term deprivation of freedom, and loss of hope have caused serious mental and physical illness as well as avoidable deaths, some by suicide.
- In addition to the human cost, the immigration detention system, especially the offshore operation, is extremely costly to the Australian taxpayer.

# Key features of Labor's refugee policies endorsed at the Special Platform Conference in March 2021 - these will improve the lives of thousands of people.

#### PERMANENT PROTECTION

- Abolish Temporary Protection Visas (TPVs) and Safe Haven Enterprise Visas (SHEVs) and transition holders to permanent protection - at least 18,000 people currently living in Australia.

#### FAMILY REUNION

- Family reunion is important to successful resettlement. Labor will prioritise applications for citizenship by families, partners and children to ensure families are kept together.

#### **REFUGEE CONVENTION**

- Reintroduce appropriate references to the Refugee Convention into the Migration Act 1958.
- Progressively increase our humanitarian intake to 27,000 a year.
- Progressively increase community sponsorship places to 5,000 per year in addition to government sponsored places.
- Significantly increase funding to support the United Nations High Commission for Refugees to improve orderly regional processing and resettlement in the region.
- Recognize the need to create an orderly pathway to resettlement in Australia to provide an alternative to a boat journey.
- Work with the UNHCR and Indonesia to work through the backlog of claims.

#### DETENTION

- Negotiate an agreement with New Zealand to resettle refugees there, similar to the one secured with the United States and approach other countries as well.
- Improve the medical transfer process for asylum seekers from Nauru and PNG requiring medical attention.
- Strive to ensure that detention is for no longer than 90 days.
- Recognize the role of Comcare enabling it to fulfill its regulatory obligations.
- Create independent and transparent oversight of detention network.
- Appoint a children's advocate independent of the Department of Home Affairs.
- Legislate to impose mandatory reporting of child abuse in detention.
- Recognize the role of state child protection authorities.

#### FAIR PROCESSING

- Abolish the Immigration Assessment Authority and create an independent Refugee Review Tribunal.

- Abolish the existing Fast Track Process about 4,500 people currently living in Australia are still waiting on decisions.
- People seeking asylum will have "means-tested access to funded migration assistance and to appropriate social services, including income, crisis housing, healthcare, mental health, community, education and English as a second language support during the assessment of the claim for protection".

#### The ALP has failed to speak out for a special intake of Afghan refugees:

*In just five months, Australia received applications from more than 145,000 Afghan nationals in desperate circumstances.* Refugee Council of Australia

The Coalition's offer - 10,000 humanitarian places over 4 years, and 5000 family reunion.

- 5,000 are the family stream that has always existed and where the government carries no cost.
- 10,000 Afghans over four years from within the existing humanitarian intake. that's 2,500 visas in the existing humanitarian program over the next four years without one additional place

Paul Powers, CEO of the Refugee Council of Australia:

Scott Morrison's Government has offered **no additional** humanitarian places and committed only to allocating places from a global humanitarian program which it cut by 5000 places a year from 2020.

Tim Costello, World Vision:

Australia is shamefully shirking taking its fair share of Afghan refugees. It's smoke and mirrors. There was **not one additional place**.

Refugee Council and Christian leaders (and many others) have called for **20,000** Afghans to be granted humanitarian visas, **in addition to Australia's annual intake.** 

## Key questions to ask (SELECT 3 or 4 to insert into your letter)

- 1. Will an ALP government guarantee to implement, within its first term, all the commitments outlined in the ALP Platform endorsed by the ALP conference in March 2021?
- 2. Please indicate the time frame for an ALP government to grant permanent protection to all people now in Australia on Temporary Protection Visas and Safe Haven Enterprise Visas, with a clear and timely pathway to Australian citizenship?
- 3. What safe, durable settlement solution does the ALP have for the refugees and people seeking asylum who were medically evacuated to Australia from offshore facilities who have been released from detention on bridging visas, and those who remain in locked detention.
- 4. What safe, durable settlement solution does the ALP have for people who sought asylum from Australia and remain on Nauru and in PNG? Would an ALP government negotiate with the New Zealand Government to provide resettlement to refugees still in PNG and Nauru?
- 5. Would an ALP government commit to a special intake of at least 20,000 visas for refugees fleeing Afghanistan?
- 6. How would the ALP form its budget to support vital refugee policies as per the platform and what would be estimated timelines for the funds to be allocated e.g. increase humanitarian intake, expenditure on offshore and onshore processing, cooperation with other South East countries to work together?
- 7. Would an ALP government remove the current ban on accepting refugees who are registered with the UNHCR in Indonesia?
- 8. Would an ALP commit to re-introducing a scheme to organise the processing of asylum seekers' visa applications in relevant south-east Asian countries, and the transporting of the acknowledged refugees to Australia by air or seaworthy vessels, as was done by the Fraser government after the Vietnam War?
- 9. Would the ALP commit to introducing a Charter of Human Rights or Bill of Rights for Australia?

# SAMPLE LETTER ALP REFUGEE POLICY 2022

Dear Senator or Dear Mr/Ms\_\_\_\_\_, for Members of House of Reps

Dear Labor MP / Senator,

As we start 2022, attention is turning towards the federal election this year.

I am writing to let you know that I, along with many other Australians, am relying on the ALP to reset Australia's refugee policy. Australia's treatment of refugees and people seeking asylum has caused much human suffering, as well as damage to Australia's international reputation.

I welcome the proposed reforms as outlined in the ALP Platform endorsed by the ALP conference in March 2021, and urge the ALP, should they win government, to implement a comprehensive alternative refugee policy which:

- returns to a protection-centred approach, away from the current punitive, securitised approach;
- engages in cooperative arrangements with our regional neighbours to expand safe pathways for people seeking protection; and
- ensures access to fair and efficient processing of asylum claims in Australia.

As your constituent, I seek further clarification about the ALP policy and your response to the following questions.

## Insert 3 or 4 questions here.

You can insert your own questions or choose from the list on page 2.

Yours sincerely
Name:
Address:

Addresses for you	ır letters:					
ALP Senators			See next age for ALP MPs	See next age for ALP MPs		
Vic						
Senator the Hon	Carr	Kim	<u>senator.carr@aph.gov.au</u>	ALP		
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Senator	Kitching	Kimberley	senator.kitching@aph.gov.au	ALP		
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Canberra Postal Address for all Senators PO Box 6100

Senate, Parliament House Canberra ACT 2600 Canberra Postal Address for all MPs PO Box 6022

House of Representatives Parliament House Canberra ACT 260

You might also like to send a copy of your letter to:

- Leader of the Parliamentary Labor Party, Anthony Albanese <u>A.Albanese.MP@aph.gov.au</u>
- Shadow Minister for Immigration and Citizenship, Kristina Keneally
  Senator Keneally prefers to use the following link to her Contact Form
  <a href="https://www.aph.gov.au/Senators">https://www.aph.gov.au/Senators</a> and Members/Contact Senator or Member?MPID=LNW

#### Some MPs and Senators now prefer to use the Contact Forms on the Australian Parliamentary Website

- This kit includes email addresses for all ALP Senators and MPs using the standard generic form.
  Those preferring Contact Forms email links are shown in brown text
- To search for your MP or Senator on the Australian Parliamentary Website
  <u>https://www.aph.gov.au/Senators\_and\_Members/Guidelines\_for\_Contacting\_Senators\_and\_Members</u>

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