



# buddies bulletin

FRIDAY 10 APRIL 2015

## Australia's human rights community has dobbed us in to the UN

Max Chalmers  
New Matilda  
3 April 2015



**A** coalition of 190 Non Government Organisations (NGOs) have warned the United Nations that Australia's human rights performance is "steadily deteriorating" and handed a range of recommendations to the international body, including that the Australian Human Rights Commission have its powers increased and independence strengthened.

In a submission to the UN's second Universal Periodic Review (UPR) the organisations highlighted a range of areas where Australia was failing to make progress or regressing, including asylum seeker rights, government consultation with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples, police related deaths, poverty and homelessness.

Anna Brown, Director of Advocacy at the Human Rights Law Centre, helped coordinate the submission, and told New Matilda Australia had

experienced "a really unfortunate slide in a number of key areas" since 2011.

Brown said the Australian government had been acting inconsistently by promoting itself as a leader in human rights at the UN but taking backward steps at home.

In September last year, Australia co-sponsored a UN Human Rights Council resolution "reaffirming the importance of establishing and strengthening independent, pluralistic national human rights institutions".

Since then, senior members of the Coalition have led regular public attacks on Australia's own Human Rights Commission, targeting President Gillian Triggs in the lead-up to and fallout following the release of the Forgotten Children report.

*The 190 organisations who endorsed the submission are listed in the article.*

### WEB

<https://newmatilda.com/2015/04/03/australias-human-rights-community-has-dobbed-us-united-nations>

### ABOUT BUDDIES

The *Buddies Refugee Support Group* is a Sunshine Coast group which advocates for just and compassionate treatment of refugees, consistent with the human rights standards which Australia has developed and endorsed.

We support policies towards refugees and asylum seekers that reflect respect, decency and traditional

*Australian generosity to those in need, while advancing Australia's international standing and national interests.*

*We are an independent community group and meet on the 4th Sunday of each month at 11am, 24 King Street Buderim.*

#### Confidentiality

Your email address is completely confidential. The Bulletin is sent Bcc [Blind carbon copy] and no-one else sees your email address.

### To contribute to Buddies

Every cent goes to asylum seeker or refugee support. You can direct debit to: **SUNCORP BANK**, BSB 484-799  
**ACCOUNT NO:** 605927994  
**ACCOUNT NAME:** BUDDIES REFUGEE SUPPORT GROUP

Or you can contribute at each meeting to "The Box". Your donations are very greatly appreciated by those we help.

[www.refugeebuddies.org.au](http://www.refugeebuddies.org.au)





## For your DIARY...

### ■ Thursday 16 April, 7-9am

Protest outside Peter Duttons electoral office  
199 Gympie Rd, Strathpine, Brisbane

### ■ Sunday 26 April, 11am

Buddies meeting, 24 King St, Buderim  
Chairperson: John Ennis ourteacherjohn@gmail.com  
5441 6437

Guest speaker: Liam Mayo – Buddies funds assisting MDA

### ■ Thursday 7 May, 10am-1pm

USC BBQ picnic – Botanical Gardens, Tanawha

### ■ Sunday 24 May, 11am

Buddies meeting, 24 King St, Buderim  
Guest speaker: Garry Bradford – Recent visit to Thai-Burma border area

### ■ Sunday 14 June, 9am-5pm

MDA Welcome Fest, free event  
Annerley Soccer Club fields, Brisbane

## HELP FUND PNG COURT CHALLENGE TO MANUS ISLAND DETENTION



### Ian Rintoul Refugee Action Coalition Sydney 23 March – 22 April

Lawyers in PNG have launched a major legal challenge to refugee detention on Manus Island, ultimately seeking the centre's closure. But they need help to meet court costs so it can continue. The legal team has already incurred initial costs preparing and filing the case and needs money to employ more lawyers and for transport to Manus Island from Port Moresby to take statements.

Please help RAC reach its target of \$12 000 before 22 April.

#### WEB

<https://www.chuffed.org/project/fund-png-court-challenge-to-manus-island-detention>



### USC BBQ/PICNIC TANAWHA BOTANICAL GARDENS

Thursday 7 May, 10am–1pm

Further details closer to the time.



**THIS WEEK'S ATTACHMENTS**  
– March 2015 Finance Report –



## PROTEST OUTSIDE PETER DUTTON'S ELECTORAL OFFICE

### HELP GIVE DUTTON THE MESSAGE: CLOSE NAURU AND MANUS NOW!

Thursday 16th April, 7am to 9am,  
199 Gympie Road, Strathpine.

The Moss Review into sexual abuse on Nauru is more evidence that Australia's off-shore detention centres should be immediately closed. This damning report follows the Australian Human Rights Commission's 'The Forgotten Children' report; a United Nations report criticising Australia's offshore detention regime.

However the Minister for Immigration and Border Protection, Peter Dutton, wants to defend the indefensible. Help him get the message.

#### Join RAC QLD members outside Peter Dutton's electoral office.

This protest will be held during the morning peak hour so bring a big clear sign to show the passing traffic how you feel.

Call Mark on 0439 561 196 for more info.





**PETITION TO SIGN:**  
Share a memory

Amnesty International  
25 March 2015



Children in detention are robbed of a normal childhood – meeting friends, playing sports, going to school and spending time with their families. The effects of detention can ruin lives.

As a 15-year-old detainee on Nauru said to the Australian Human Rights Commission: “I’ve changed a lot, I’m not fun anymore. I’m just thinking about bad stuff now ... I was thinking of becoming a doctor but not any more.”

There are currently 107 children being held in the detention centre on Nauru and more than 60 children detained in Australia who could be returned to Nauru at any time. Some are just babies.

The problem is huge. But the tide is turning. With your help, we believe we can win.

Share a memory from your childhood and show the Australian Government what is destroyed when we detain children. And sign the petition calling for children in detention to be released.

**WEB**

[http://www.amnesty.org.au/event/lost-children?utm\\_source=lostchildren&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_content=link3&utm\\_campaign=refugees\\_629](http://www.amnesty.org.au/event/lost-children?utm_source=lostchildren&utm_medium=email&utm_content=link3&utm_campaign=refugees_629)



**ACT leads moves to soften ALP refugee policy**

Ross Peake *The Canberra Times*, 3 April 2015

The ACT is helping lead the charge to ensure asylum seeker policy is front and centre at the Labor Party national conference to be held in Melbourne in July.. A new element has been injected into this dynamic with the appointment to the Senate of Katy Gallagher to represent the ACT. Around the country, ALP members are preparing motions for the conference, Some will target their anger at the parliamentary leadership’s blatant refusal to follow the national Labor platform on asylum seekers.

**WEB**

<http://www.canberratimes.com.au/act-news/act-leads-moves-to-soften-alp-refugee-policy-20150403-1mcbcc.html?stb=tw>



**Reclaim Australia rallies ‘hurtful’ to new migrants and refugees**

Shalailah Medhora  
*The Guardian*, 6 April 2015

Refugees and new migrants feel more isolated and vulnerable following last weekend’s Reclaim Australia rallies, community leaders said.

The anti-Islam rallies on Saturday attracted hundreds of demonstrators nationwide who were protesting against halal certification, sharia law and increased Muslim migration. Counterprotests were held in several cities, in some cases eclipsing the original rallies.

**WEB**

<http://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/apr/06/reclaim-australia-rallies-hurtful-new-migrants-refugees>



## Nauru refugees defy savage new anti-protest law

**Ian Rintoul, Refugee Action Coalition  
Sydney, 8 April 2015**

Hundreds of refugees on Nauru have staged a protest against offshore processing in defiance of a new law that requires protesters to give seven days notice of any protest and gives the police commissioner sole power to allow a protest, or not.

A representative of the Nauruan government has toured refugee camps on the island declaring that protests even in refugee camps are now banned. Astonishingly the penalty for taking part in an unauthorised assembly is a fine of \$3000 or two year's jail or both!

The law also seems to require every participant in a protest (if one was allowed) to have a permit or risk being arrested.

### WEB

<http://www.refugeeaction.org.au/?p=3977>

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## Nauru staff call for closure of asylum centre and royal commission into abuse

**Paul Farrell and Ben Doherty  
The Guardian, 7 April 2015**

The government has been aware of physical and sexual abuse of asylum seekers on Nauru for more than a year but failed to take appropriate action, workers from the detention centre have alleged.

In an unprecedented move, 23 current and former medical staff, teachers, social workers and child protection staff have signed an open letter calling for the removal of all asylum seekers from Nauru to Australia. They have also called for a royal commission into sexual abuse on Nauru and into the government's response.

### WEB

<http://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/apr/07/nauru-staff-call-for-closure-of-asylum-centre-and-royal-commission-into-abuse>

## Transfield staff told they can be fired for using Facebook

**Ben Doherty  
The Guardian, 7 April 2015**

The company that runs Australia's offshore immigration detention centres has warned staff they can be fired as a result of who their friends are on Facebook or who follows them on Twitter and has forbidden them from joining political parties or churches that oppose offshore processing. It has also cautioned them not to "embarrass" the company or the government or reveal how asylum seekers are treated. The policy says workers must not reveal any information about Transfield's operations, or any information that "relates to the treatment of transferees in relation to the operations".

### WEB

<http://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2015/apr/07/transfield-immigration-staff-told-they-can-be-fired-for-using-facebook>



## SATIRE: Journalists allowed on Manus if they leave Yelp review

**The Backburner, 7 April 2015**

After today's damaging revelations that detention centre staff employed by Transfield are subject to strict social media policy which prevents them from associating with anyone critical of offshore processing, the company has announced that journalists will be allowed on Manus Island if they promise to leave a 5-star Yelp review.

A Transfield spokesperson confirmed that transparency was an important goal for the company. "We have been unfairly criticised for denying journalists and media organisations access to our facilities and employees," the spokesperson said at press conference. "In reality, they are more than welcome if they leave a 5-star Yelp review and at least a paragraph's worth of nice words."

### WEB

<http://www.sbs.com.au/comedy/article/2015/04/07/journalists-allowed-manus-island-if-they-leave-5-star-yelp-review>



## Human rights lawyer Newhouse wins case against Andrew Bolt

**Louise Hall, The Age, 2 April 2015**

Human rights lawyer George Newhouse has won his defamation case against controversial News Corp blogger Andrew Bolt.

The NSW Supreme Court ordered a verdict for Mr Newhouse and said News Corp was to pay his legal costs. The terms of the order requires the article to be taken down from News Corp's various online sites. Other terms of the settlement are confidential.

Mr Newhouse sued over an piece written by Bolt in July 2014, which carried the headline "Fearmongers' hateful fraud". In it, Bolt claimed Mr Newhouse was part of the "refugee lobby", which had fraudulently asserted that certain Sri Lankan people who had arrived by boat were genuine asylum seekers.

### WEB

<http://www.theage.com.au/nsw/human-rights-lawyer-george-newhouse-wins-defamation-case-against-news-corps-andrew-bolt-20150402-1mdkpc.html?stb=tw>

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## 'Renew Australia' a lament for the country we should have had

**Van Badham, The Guardian, 27 March 2015**

Former PM Malcolm Fraser spent the last four years of his life creating a new political party, which he'd named Renew Australia. The party had not made it as far as registration with the Australian Electoral Commission before Fraser's death, but Renew Australia's draft manifesto was published by Crikey.

It's an extraordinary document, and not merely as the startup party project of a former Liberal leader. When Renew Australia claims that "the country is looking once more for intelligent and enlightened leadership, inspired by a belief in justice, integrity and a sense of a fair go", it's speaking to values that were once shared by both the Liberal and Labor parties.

### WEB

<http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2015/mar/27/malcolm-frasers-renew-australia-party-is-a-lament-for-the-country-we-should-have-had>



## Asylum applications surge, just not in Australia

**Max Chalmers, New Matilda, 7 April 2015**

As applications in Australia dwindle, the rest of the world is under increasing pressure to deal with record numbers of asylum seekers, the UNHCR's annual asylum trends report has shown. For the fourth consecutive year the number of applications in industrialised nations has increased, up 45 per cent from the previous year. But as other wealthy nations face growing numbers of applications, Australia is bucking the trend, with a 23 per cent decline in the number of applications registered in 2014.

### WEB

<https://newmatilda.com/2015/04/07/lifters-and-leaners-asylum-applications-surge-just-not-australia>



## How we've failed as a nation on arbitrary detention

**Olivia Ball, The Age, 7 April 2015**

The Abbott government has submitted a tardy and disappointing response to the UNHCR Committee's ruling that 46 refugees subject to secret ASIO assessments are being arbitrarily detained.

Tony Abbott might think Australians are "sick of being lectured to by the United Nations", but has he wondered how Australians feel about our international reputation being trashed?

### WEB

<http://www.theage.com.au/comment/how-weve-failed-as-a-nation-on-arbitrary-detention-20150406-1mf1ac.html>

## Buddies meeting, 22 March 2015



**Chairperson – Garry Bates,  
notetaker – Dee Williams.**

**Apologies – Kendall Snowden, Yokki Rother,  
Terry Boyce, Kayla Szumer, Audrey Raymond,  
Rada Van Der Werff, Stephanie Akers, Suzanne  
Ennis, Jenny and Ross Hughes, Penny Rivlin,  
Lindel Gregory**

### **Finance: Fergus FitzGerald (report attached)**

Our MDA contribution will increase from \$500 to \$800 per month from April to cover future asylum seeker training programs.

We are holding \$3000 for Immigration legal support for our asylum seeker friends here on the coast. At next month's meeting we will need to discuss some options for the distribution of monies set aside to aid asylum seekers, currently over \$4000.

### **Hospitality: Picnic – Bronwyn Bell**

USC lecturer Tara Gamble and her Health Science students have offered to organise a picnic at the Tanawha Botanical Gardens on 7 May, 10am and 1pm. They are hoping to have refugees and asylum seekers attending with Buddies members. Annaliese Broadaway will speak to the students a week before to inform them about Buddies.

Bronwyn has compiled a list of members willing to speak about the work of Buddies at schools and community groups.

### **Learn English Holiday – Kaye Spierings**

8-13 March: Originally 16 students from Brisbane were placed with host families, but there were 4 late cancellations. The 12 men from Iran, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Sri Lanka and Sudan quickly bonded with one another. Along with school each day, they played sport and had picnics and some meals together. Young Buddies hosted a multi-cultural dinner at Cottontree Park where the participants shared dishes from their home countries.

Expenses for school, travel and morning teas were covered by funds raised by members working at Eumundi Markets car parking. This was another very successful L.E.H. experience.

### **Events:**

Kaye reported that in her class at Chevallum primary school she promoted the work of Buddies for Harmony Day, 21st March.

Bronwyn and Abdul were invited to Blackall Range Independent School on 19 March to talk to the children about our work with refugees and asylum seekers.

On 22nd March, Kendall and helpers organised and served afternoon tea at the Lake Kawana Community Centre where the Brisbane Symphony Orchestra presented a concert. The afternoon tea was a fund-raising event for Buddies.

Quinn Kerr reported on library activities she's instigating on Mondays. She is also collaborating on a crowd-funded E-book.

Garry proposed that we make a calendar of events for 2015. to be made available on our website.

### **Recap of suggestions for 2015**

- \* Variety concert (Carmel Dobson)
- \* Film night (Jessica Raintree/ Bronwyn)
- \* Art auction and/or display (Brenda Smith)
- \* Protest (John Ennis)
- \* Peaceful sit-in at MP's office (Grant Allen)
- \* Book launch – Jane McAdam's latest book (Freddie Steen)
- \* Used books sale
- \* Seeking out of employment offers on SC (Garry)
- \* Bumper stickers (Maggie Coad)

### **Handing over of admin tasks**

- \* Organising guest speakers for meetings (Val Ross)
- \* Liaising with church and custodian of key (Margaret Landbeck)
- \* Handling email correspondence and phone calls and maintaining files (Scott Grimmett)
- \* Printing of flyers and leaflets (Quinn/Fergus)
- \* Updating of welcome document (Julia Peddie/ Fergus)

Garry called for a vote of thanks to be extended to Bronwyn for the work, the contacts, the 'behind the scene' stuff that has accumulated and been dealt with from her desk over the past 12 years. Fergus spoke of her role and the huge effort she has freely given. The meeting showed its gratitude with warm applause. We are deeply indebted to Bronwyn for her dedication and efficiency in the roles she has undertaken. Bronwyn responded by thanking us for this acknowledgement. She explained that as Buddies has grown, so too have the admin requirements, to the point of now requiring more volunteers to deal with them.

### **Incorporation**

Garry stated all members will have the chance to vote on incorporation. It will be anonymous voting via Survey Monkey, sent by email, prepared by Quinn and Libby Morrison.

### **News from asylum seeker friends**

Garry reported that Anton needs somewhere else to stay, as the unit in Buderim will no longer be available.

John stated he gained much information from the LEH asylum seekers they hosted.

### **Next meeting:**

26th April, chairperson – John, notetaker – Val

Meeting closed around 12.30pm. Those who wished regathered at 1pm to discuss incorporation.