

## RAR National Conference Sept 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup>

# One Voice: One vision

## Feedback from Workshop - Thinking Nationally. Working Locally

Three workshops were held on the Saturday morning of the Conference.

Participants were given only 20 minutes to decide on a topic and share their experiences.

They were asked to write them up and then speak briefly to their notes.

What follows is a transcription from their notes, duplicates have been omitted.

Groups were asked to choose from the following topics

1. Changing Hearts and Minds
2. Raising money
3. Getting Publicity
4. Supporting Refugees
5. Attract new members
6. Maintain Enthusiasm and commitment.

A further topic was suggested and added

7. Influencing Politicians.

### 1. Changing Hearts and Minds

- At the least 'out' ourselves as members of a particular group (RAR, GADRC, etc.)
- Use Facebook/ social media - respond to negativity with a positive reframe
- Inform our communities including those in power about what other communities/countries are doing e.g. Germany
- We want to feel proud of our community
- With current Local Government elections coming up talk to candidates both at 'heart' level and also mind, e.g. refugees are good for the economy
- Deliver facts politely, counter arguments politely.

- Respectful communication.
- Be inclusive where possible.
- Find points of commonality
- Raise Public awareness by:
  - Street stalls
  - Letter Writing (e.g. every Wed in the library in Castlemaine)
  - Art installations (e.g. Grandmothers children cut-out)
  - Use Public Holiday events/festivals (Christmas, Human Rights Day)
  - Donation points (goods or funds) in public places e.g. IGA have a donation box for goods for people in detention
  - Public rallies/parades (not 'just' related to refugee related but tying into city shows, multicultural festivals. Pakofest (sic.), Harmony Day.)
  - Visible permanent banners (outside churches, city councils, our homes)
  - Tapping into lived experience locally (but be cautious, that some people are very anti)
  - Speaking at schools, churches on invitation, community groups, service clubs, U3A
    - The conversation
      - Problem brings opportunities
      - They are **people** seeking asylum
      - UN and Australia - global ideas, working together
      - Defining 'our' problem, getting some perspective
      - Fitting people seeking asylum into skilled immigration intake as preferred category.
      - Are people seeking asylum so different?
- Linking like-minded groups under one banner, the RAR banner?
- Engaging young people by:
  - Social media, Snapchat, etc.
  - Finding key contacts to spread the message.
  - Find 'fun' alternate ways required to engage youth.
  - School social justice groups.
  - Prepare background work for teachers for 'doing' refugee week, Units of work covering ethics, social justice.
  - Young Vinnies leaders.
  - Music: fund raisers organised by young people
  - School groups creating art work or other school based activities can be publicised on social media

- Using social media, daily updates can include:
  - Events in the news, locally protests, vigils, etc.
  - Twitter: Tweets during conferences, meetings, movies, etc, using # for media pick up,
  - Facebook to friends and family.
  - The Guardian (online newspaper) where news on people seeking asylum is to be found and then retold in tweets, posted onto Facebook.
  - Use Google Alerts.
  - Problem - there are restrictions on using pictures of actual people in detention.
- Education is vital.
- Food2fund -support a local FF network.
- Regular letter writing to politicians, remember hand written is best in a public place, library/community centre.
- Ribbon making (prior to local, state, federal elections).
- Regular Street work - table and tent at local events.
- Regular vigils at markets and in public places.
- Camp - bringing city based refugees to rural areas.
- The Anglican Church has an Iranian Christian Church in Dandenong.
- Ensure local publicity in local newspapers for everything, film nights, etc.
- Use personal contacts with journalists.
- At stalls in local markets to attract discussion.
- Befriend specific refugees.
- Getting refugees to tell their stories at meetings.
- Conversations with friends and acquaintances.
- Get informative books in to schools.
- Have discussions following films.
- Disseminate information after sourcing current information.
- Inform and get local councillors on side.
- Handout info at polling booths.
- For conversations
  - Start with the heart
  - Need arguments and evidence to support, data, photos
  - Need a viable argument to win people over, e.g. Vietnamese boat people
  - 56% of people are persuadable, look up ASRC study by American linguist, change the language, say 'people' seeking asylum

- The Government has used 'spin' doctors to make their arguments ... Using the ASRC research we must change the conversation using different language.
- Adding the work 'family' helps to change people's perceptions.
- We need to energise and motivate the 'persuadables' to become the 'converted'. Build their base so that they can convert others.
- Look for "Right Track" research on the ASRC website.
- Preparing policy comparison sheets.
- Making submissions re parliamentary bills.
- Involve indigenous people in support for people seeking asylum.
- Highlighting the connection between climate change and refugees, the Arab Spring is in reality the first climate change related conflict.

## 2. Influencing Politicians

- Votes will be gained by decent behaviour.
- Provide evidence.
- Polls research (from academics not the media).
- Behind the Wire - a good source of personal stories: <http://behindthewire.org.au/>
- Challenge mentality (Labor) re flow of preferences.
- Award for the most moral politician.
  - Provide positive feedback to those who want to change.
  - Do research - the other groups, who are they?
- Develop strategies
  - Maintain ongoing contact with your local politicians, provide them with support and resources, and give them the 'ammunition' they need to make an argument.
  - Tackle the lies of 'saving lives' and separate that argument from the persecution of the people in the camps.
  - Offer face saving options, a way out.
  - Personalise your voting intentions to your local members.
  - Focus on influencing the powerful people and groups in the local area, e.g. businesses, clubs, etc.
  - Encourage MPs/Senators to visit a detention Centre (Andrew Broad).
  - Ask direct questions and follow up for a response.
  - Issues scanning: What have they said/done re refugees in the past?
  - Face to face meetings, phone calls, letter writing to politicians.
  - Concentrate on your own electorate.
  - Target polities as a group: meet to write letters together, phone banking.

- Encourage others in the community to call, write, approach.
- Hold them to account.

### **A process for getting the most out of your contact with a politician**

1. Ongoing relationship
2. Repeated meetings
3. Access the CO staff if MP not available
4. Don't go in cold
5. Send letters and make phone calls to local media
6. Invite media to meetings
7. Refer Pollie to crucial media, TV radio, print
8. Check they have done this.
9. Seek a meeting, send a briefing paper
10. Ask what their response is, what they think
11. Respect them as a person, model the behaviour you want them to use.
12. Report the meeting afterwards on social media and tell them you will be doing this

### **3. Support for Local Refugees**

- Welcome nights for single men (tea and biscuits).
- Help with forms.
- Speakers from local services SES Fire Brigade.
- Invite politicians.
- Buses to take refugees to meet communities that have not met refugees, hear their stories and see their family photos, forge links and friendships.
- Local women run ESL courses and conversational English.
- Run a drop in centre for people seeking asylum.
- Bring people from Melbourne to visit country areas.
- Working with the Shire/local council on resettlement plan.
- Visits to the detention Centres in Maribyrnong.
- Picnics in public places.
- Visits to homes of refugees.
- Community food drops.

#### **4. Attract new members**

- Attend rallies
- Market stalls
- Build up mailing lists
- encourage building local networks e.g. local employment
- Convert mailing list members to active members; get people to be active (the same people do everything)
- Launch a Young People for Refugees RAR group (Bendigo has one)
- There are already lots of interest groups, young Mums for Refugees, Doctors for Refugees etc. Talk with them
- Have a presence at shops, etc. to talk to people. Brand yourself, wear a T shirt, badge, etc.
- Run events that get you seen and be prepared with info and answers to typical questions
- Stopped calling meetings 'meetings', started calling them coffee mornings and attendances increased
- Think about whether you need formal structures rather than just enabling people just to put up their hands (incorporation rules can prevent loose structures)
- Groups need to adapt to our 'newer' ways of living e.g. meetings may be less often

#### **How do we involve younger people?**

- Launch of Young People for Refugees in Bendigo.
- There may be other groups we don't know about.
- Find key people in schools and universities.
- Book packs to schools, both primary and secondary.

#### **5. How do we maintain enthusiasm and commitment?**

- Knowing the refugees (even just one) and their stories
- Giving opportunity to people to be involved meeting like-minded people in the organisation of activities and rallies
- Being instrumental in introducing refugees into your own community
- Exposing the cultures and other positive attributes which refugees bring to a community
- Using pop-ups, songs and chants, street working, art exhibitions.

#### **6. Raising Money**

- Market stalls (which includes information for community education)
- Social enterprise projects involving local refugees

- Raise money for people seeking asylum
  - for scholarships and legal fees
  - Protection of visa applications
  - Material aid
  - Social activities
- Dinners and Events: concerts, food festivals, movies
- Co-op shops/ op shops
- Community cinema
- Crowd funding (online and word of mouth)for legal fees, interpreters, document translation, food items, vouchers
- Fees for speaking to groups
- Sponsorship through businesses
- Donations through word of mouth and buckets at events
- Local government grants for Councils who are signed up at Refugee Welcome Zones.

7. **Getting Publicity** - *Many suggestions were covered in other areas*

- Community events in local park, henna demonstrations, picnics
- Cooking in the local college and transporting and serving food in local park  
(In Swan Hill, 3 - 4 thousand people come from around the region)
- Mobile libraries, use them as a tool to get pamphlets out into the wider community
- Art installations encourage other artists to engage.
- Roadside signs advertising events.
- Interviews on local radio/calling in to talk back radio
- Submitting letters to the Editor and editorial pieces