Bendigo RAR works with many other local advocacy and support groups

For example:
- Young People for Refugees
- Grandmothers against Detention of Refugee Children – Bendigo
- Bendigo Friends and Mentors
- Amnesty International Australia – Bendigo
- Bendigo Community Health
- Loddon Campaspe Multicultural Services
- Central Victorian Refugee Support Network

In this newsletter we will introduce you to a few of these organisations.

Meet the new bubbly, bouncy and dynamic group in town …

Young People for Refugees
YPR

You can email YPR at: yprbendigo@gmail.com

YPR are on Instagram: https://www.instagram.com/yprbendigo/?hl=en

YPR are on Twitter: https://twitter.com/yprbendigo

And check out the YPR website: www.yprbendigo.com

Young People for Refugees (YPR) is a group of the young, and the young at heart, whose mission is three-fold:

- We advocate for People Seeking Asylum in Australia because it is easier to hear people in your own community than it is to hear people behind barbed wire fences and high walls.
- YPR provides support to New Australians in our community by welcoming them and showing them we are a great community to be a part of.
- YPR aims to educate its members on how to be better advocates for those who really need it.

YPR is a branch of the Rural Australians for Refugees (RAR) Bendigo group.

Tayla is the driving force behind Young People for Refugees

You can read all YPR’s recent activities in their 2016 Report to the Community at: http://bit.ly/2mCeTb9

In Tayla’s own words: “It has been an incredible honour to have founded Young People for Refugees, I never have imagined during Refugee Week 2016, when YPR with just an idea, that we would have come as far as we have today.”
Did you know? …

Since 2010, **Bendigo Local Settlement Network**, has become a network of over 20 organisations. The overarching purpose of this network is to facilitate self-reliance and social cohesion among migrants, international students and refugees in Bendigo so they are settled and empowered.

The objectives of the BLSN are to achieve the following:

- Determining unmet settlement needs and issues, and linking people with appropriate services, programs and networks.
- Provide a conduit for relevant information regarding settlement to reach network members.
- At each meeting there are various reports, for example:
  - **Bendigo Community Health** which provides settlement services for refugees – both humanitarian and those who came by boat before 2012.
  - **LCMS** which has many programs for refugees and migrants including the case management of SAFE Haven Enterprise Visas (SHEVs).
- Working groups including the English Education & Employment, Health & Well-being, and SHEV.

Current RAR representatives: Gillian and Ian

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### Visit to Discovery Centre

Over 40 people attended the event. Thanks to the Bendigo Lions Club. There is a great opportunity for ongoing connection with Discovery to be discussed at the Feb meeting.

### Meeting schedule for 2017

Open committee meetings to be held every second month in the upstairs meeting room at the Library from 4.30 pm til 6 pm. Everyone is welcome to attend.

- Apr 10, June 12 (May be changed as this is a holiday), Aug 14, Oct 9, **AGM - Nov 13**

Alternate months, a small group will meet to discuss matching and any issues that arise with individual mentors and their families.

**Coffee mornings** - Judith Long will continue to arrange dates & email all mentors inviting them.

Contact Helen or Mary - Email: [fambendigo@gmail.com](mailto:fambendigo@gmail.com)

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### Central Victorian Refugee Support Network (CVRSN)

The Central Victorian Refugee Support Network meets in Castlemaine bi-monthly with representatives from 6 local RAR groups – Ballarat, Bendigo, Castlemaine, Daylesford, Macedon Ranges and Maryborough.

The CVRSN currently has 2 main functions:

1. To strengthen links between local RAR groups for effective of sharing of information, etc.
2. To initiating local projects – e.g. The Accommodation and Employment Working Group; encouraging new RAR groups, etc.

It was from CVRSN that the RAR National Network was reborn in late 2014.

For further information, contact Gillian - [rarbendigo@gmail.com](mailto:rarbendigo@gmail.com)

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### National RAR Network

Email: [rar.australia@gmail.com](mailto:rar.australia@gmail.com)

Online at [www.ruralaustraliansforrefugees.org.au](http://www.ruralaustraliansforrefugees.org.au)

On [Twitter](https://twitter.com) and on [Facebook](https://facebook.com)
Bendigo Networking Forum 2017 ... Support for former Refugees and Those Seeking Asylum

5pm - 8pm, Thursday, 4 May, 2017. St Andrews Hall

This Forum follows on from the success of the inaugural forum in February 2016, out of which grew a Directory of Refugee Services and Organisations.

If you are interested in assisting organise the Forum, or would like further information please contact Marie - rarbendigo@gmail.com

Mariam Issa - Building Community by Building Community Gardens

Mariam Issa is coming to Bendigo to share her passion for community gardens and community.

Dates: 17 June, at the Salvation Army Hall, a beautiful venue with a community garden

This is a joint-venture of Bendigo GADRC* and Bendigo RAR.

Lunch will be provided - $10

Times tbc.

Contact Helen or Marie if you’re interested in helping – rarbendigo@gmail.com


Other joint ventures with Bendigo RAR, Bendigo GADRC* and Amnesty International (Bendigo)

1. Monthly Roadside Rally at Rosalind Park (View Street end): 5.30pm on the Friday following the second Tuesday of every month. Bring your passion, bring your signs, and bring your friends.

2. Monthly information Stall - if you are interested in helping organise a stall, or being on the roster, please contact - rarbendigo@gmail.com

* GADRC is acronym for Grandmothers against Detention of Refugee Children

Marie’s sign says it all

Margaret and Judy remind us that Bendigo is a designated Refugee Welcome Zone
CALL FOR ACTION

You may have heard that the Department of Immigration and Border Protection recently sent letters to some people on Bridging Visas to advise that, unless they lodge their protection visa applications within 14 - 30 days, they may lose their right to asylum.

*Human rights lawyer David Manne has called this approach ‘draconian and dangerous’: [http://bit.ly/2mZxv8i](http://bit.ly/2mZxv8i)*

ARAN (Australian Refugee Action Network) is calling for refugee action and advocacy groups and individuals across Australia to participate in some kind of action to demand that this new policy be abandoned.

The government has forced people onto waiting lists for legal support by:

1. Developing protection visa application forms which cannot be adequately completed without legal assistance (the forms are complex, and incomplete information can mean claims for asylum are rejected)
2. Removing funding for refugee legal support services
3. Banning anyone from submitting an application for four years, and then suddenly expecting more than 25,000 people to complete their applications all at once
4. Failing to process, in a timely manner, the Freedom of Information requests needed to access records that are crucial for applications.

The letters state that those receiving them must submit their protection visa applications within 14–30 days, otherwise they:

- Will lose their income support
- **May not be issued with another Bridging Visa**
- May lose their work rights and Medicare
- **May lose access to other services and support**
- May be prevented from being allowed to submit an application for a protection visa at all
- **This is a grave injustice which would result in people being deported to unsafe places, and being at risk of further persecution and even death.**

**Contact MPs:**

- **Key messages:**
  - People should not be penalised for a problem that the government has created.
  - Not allowing people time to access appropriate legal support is a denial of natural justice, and incorrect decisions on life and death matters.
  - Rushing applications will put some people at risk of deportation to danger.

- **Call and/or email** **Minister for Immigration and Border Protection Peter Dutton**
  - Phone: (07) 3205 9977 (Strathpine) or (02) 6277 7860 (Canberra)
  - Email: minister@immi.gov.au

- **Call and/or email** **Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull**
  - Phone: (02) 6277 7700 (Canberra) or (02) 9327 3988 (Wentworth)
  - Email: [https://www.pm.gov.au/contact-your-pm](https://www.pm.gov.au/contact-your-pm)

- **Call or email your local MP.** **Labor Member for Bendigo Lisa Chesters**
  - Phone: (02) 6277 4657 or (03) 5443 9055
  - Email: Lisa.Chesters.MP@aph.gov.au

- **Call or email** **Shadow Minister for Immigration and Border Protection Shayne Neumann**
  - Phone: (02) 6277 4755 or (07) 3201 5300
  - Email: Shayne.Neumann.MP@aph.gov.au

- **Visit your local MP - Request a meeting** to discuss this issue.
  - It’s vital that local MPs understand what is happening, and hear our concerns.
  - **As Bendigo’s local MP is a Labor member, ask that Labor publicly oppose this measure.**

- Organise a rally or protest - This could be outside your local MP’s office, or at another community venue.
  - Perhaps print copies of the 60+ page 866 or 790 forms and use these as props/posters for your action.

National RAR Petition ... due ... 30th April 2017


Return to original copy to Mike at:

39 Rogers Drive, Valla Beach NSW 2448
Standing in Solidarity –
Message from the Asylum Seeker Resource Centre (ASRC)

Thanks to all who donated so quickly and readily to the recent ASRC Urgent Appeal launched in response to the protection claim submission changes outlined on page 1. The changes have heightened the rush on legal services, leaving people unable to submit their applications or forcing them to apply without legal help. In five days over $400,000 was donated to ASRC to fund 5 human rights lawyers, to assist the 1,150 people on their legal waiting list.

ASRC Workshops in Castlemaine:
- How to have persuasive conversations
- Who and where to have conversations for maximum impact
- How to get the message across with politicians and media
- Planning for social change
- Taking action in your local area

Join us …
For a day of strategy, collaboration and action.
These workshops are for those who want to take action and will involve working with others in their local area to achieve a sustainable change in community attitudes.

We want to create a unified voice, providing local communities with the tools to speak positively and effectively about these issues.

And a message from the ASRC Material Aids Team

Your contribution directly supports asylum seekers with vital services. The ASRC has over 2,000 asylum seeker members, many who live in the community without rights to work or financial support of any kind. Our Material Aid and Foodbank services are essential to their wellbeing.

In the last 12 months, these programs provided
- 39,569 nappies
- Weekly groceries for over 200 families
- 1,400 asylum seekers with blankets and coats
- 196,223 hours of access to public transport

It's only because of people such as you that we are able to achieve all we do. Your generosity will help us to continue to provide life-saving aid and assistance to people seeking asylum throughout the year.

You can keep up to date with all the ASRC's Material Aid and Foodbank's activities and current needs through our Facebook page - www.facebook.com/ASRCFoodbank.

From everyone at the centre, we thank you for standing with us to protect, support and empower our members.

Sincerely, Material Aid Team

Bendigo RAR provided Material Support for New Family settling in our district
There were many people who responded to the recent request for household materials. A big thank you to all of you. The family are very happy now they have their own place.

Note: For more information, links to websites are given throughout the newsletter. If any of the links don’t function, copy and paste into your browser
1. **Changes to SHEV and TPV application rule** - call to action/donations
   The government is hoping to have all applications processed by Nov 2017. [http://bit.ly/2kYzafe](http://bit.ly/2kYzafe)

   **From ASRC:**
   The Turnbull government has launched an unprecedented attack on people seeking asylum who after waiting over 4 years to apply for asylum, now only have as little as 30 days to lodge their refugee application.

   *If people don’t lodge their application in time, the government has threatened to take away their right to apply for asylum in Australia – something no other country has ever done.*

   Refugee legal services across Australia are urgently appealing to you to help fund lawyers in order to keep the people safe.

   **Act now. Go to one of these refugee legal services in Australia and donate:**

2. **Mobile Phone Ban Update**
   The Border Force Commissioner has defended his agency’s decision to ban all mobile phone use in the nation’s onshore detention centres, arguing it is a way of cracking down on crime within the facilities.

   **Key points:**
   - Roman Quaedvlieg says he needs to “ensure the security and safety of detainees”
   - He has discussed policy with Peter Dutton for 12 months
   - Labor asks why such policy is applied to all detainees

   Refugee advocates have been fighting the ban, and the Federal Court has granted an injunction against the seizure of phones across mainland centres and on Christmas Island.

   “*The Federal Court has blocked a bid by the Australian Border Force to confiscate the mobile phones of detainees in immigration detention.*

   “*Refugee advocates say about 80 detainees will be able to keep their phones as a result of the temporary injunction imposed by the court on Sunday. The injunction was ordered just hours before the seizure was due to commence.*”


   For background... ABC News (28 Feb 2017) - [http://ab.co/2lsqeu](http://ab.co/2lsqeu)

   [RAC NSW Response](http://www.refugeeaction.org.au/?p=5785)

3. **State of the Nation Report** - Refugee Council of Australia 2017
   The world is in the midst of an unprecedented humanitarian crisis. Yet Australia’s approach in recent years has been to punish people seeking asylum, while increasing the numbers of refugees it resettles.

   This contrasting approach threatens the long and proud history Australia has of successful integration of refugee communities.

   *This report reflects what we have heard from refugees and people seeking asylum, and the people supporting them. We thank all of the people who contributed to this report.*

   **Summary Recommendations**
   I. Allocating at least 5,000 visas under the family stream of the Migration Program for refugee and humanitarian entrants.
   II. Introducing needs-based concessions under the family stream of the Migration Program.
   III. Conducting a consultation with refugee communities, practitioners involved in providing support with family reunion applications and other relevant stakeholders to develop a process for assessing eligibility for the concessions
   IV. Significantly reducing existing processing times for family reunion applications, improving procedures for communicating with visa proposers and applicants, restoring funding for professional migration advice services, expanding the no interest loan scheme and extending eligibility for the scheme, reviewing the definition of “family” used to assess and prioritise family reunion applications and removing current restrictions on family reunion for refugees who arrived by boat
   V. Substantially reducing the visa application charges, increasing the size of the Community Support Program and breaking the numerical link between this program and Refugee and Humanitarian Program
Despite a very long campaign for refugee rights, there has been no nation-wide network of grassroots action and advocacy groups.

A national network would support the efforts of the many and diverse groups which are working to bring about change in Australia’s refugee policies.

To this end, the **Australian Refugee Action Network (ARAN)** was formed, and has a membership of 27 refugee advocacy/action networks and significant organisations across the nation.

To strengthen this newly formed alliance, a national conference is planned - May 20 – 21 2017. **The ARAN Conference will provide opportunity to:**

- Discuss ways to improve communication and co-ordination between grassroots action and advocacy groups in the refugee sector.
- Discuss and establish a common position based on the areas of agreed campaign priorities
- Share ideas and experience for mobilising and effective campaigning.
- Form a workable system for organised national collaboration.

Communication and coordination between our groups and organisations, while maintaining the autonomy and diversity of individual groups, will maximise the impact of our various campaign actions and efforts.

ARAN has established a National Conference Committee to draft the agenda, arrange speakers etc. The Refugee Action Committee, Canberra will take care of logistics – venue, food, etc. The conference will be moderately priced ($50 waged, $20 unwaged) and is open to all who are interested in refugee activism and advocacy.

**Bookings:** [https://www.trybooking.com/OZGU](https://www.trybooking.com/OZGU)  
Mark your diary – 20 - 21 May 2017. Plan to join us!  
Details of the conference program will be available soon.

ARAN currently has a membership of 27 refugee networks and large membership organisations.

**Special RAR In-House Session**

A Conference within a Conference

On Saturday we will have the opportunity to gather as a RAR Network and discuss matters pertinent to Rural Australians for Refugees.

This is a chance to meet again with friends from last September, and to make new friends.

Let’s ensure there are many RAR members able to attend from Bendigo and Central Victoria. As the host group of the 2016 National RAR Conference, Bendigo RAR has won a special place in the hearts and minds of others.

**BRING YOUR CONCERNS ... BRING YOUR PASSION ... BRING YOUR FRIENDS**

And don’t forget to Register: [https://www.trybooking.com/OZGU](https://www.trybooking.com/OZGU)
Local and National Contact List

Rural Australians for Refugees - Bendigo
- Rural Australians for Refugees - Bendigo Facebook
- Bendigo Page on National RAR Website
- Email: rarbendigo@gmail.com

Young People for Refugees
- Young People for Refugees Facebook and Twitter
- Young People for Refugees Website
- Email: ypr@gmail.com

Bendigo Friends and Mentors
- Email: fambendigo@gmail.com

National RAR Network
- National Rural Australians for Refugees Website
- National Rural Australians for Refugees on Facebook
- National Rural Australians for Refugees on Twitter
- Email: rar.australia@gmail.com

ARAN - Australian Refugee Action Network
- Australian Refugee Action Network Facebook
- Australian Refugee Action Network Website
- Email: austrefugeenetwork@gmail.com

Grandmothers against Detention of Refugee Children Bendigo
- Grandmothers against Detention of Refugee Children Bendigo Facebook
- Grandmothers against Detention of Refugee Children Bendigo Twitter
- Grandmothers against Detention of Refugee Children Bendigo Website
- Email: GADRC.Bendigo@gmail.com

Amnesty International Australia
- Amnesty International Australia – Bendigo Group Facebook
- Email: amnestybendigo@gmail.com

RCOA - Refugee Council of Australia
- RCOA - Refugee Council of Australia Facebook
- RCOA - Refugee Council of Australia Website
- Email: admin@refugeecouncil.org.au

ASRC – Asylum Seeker Resource Centre
- ASRC – Asylum Seeker Resource Centre Facebook
- ASRC – Asylum Seeker Resource Centre Website
- Email: admin@asrc.org.au