



Friday 6 April

Gillian Triggs “An Australian Bill of Rights”

Professor Gillian Triggs called for an Australian Bill of Rights during her presentation to the Annual Conference.

“Unlike almost every other comparable country Australia has no bill of rights against which government policies, legislation and actions can be benchmarked,” Professor Triggs told the 300-strong conference.

She gave examples of how the human rights of people seeking asylum have suffered because courts have not had such a legal tool to use.

“Papua New Guinea has a modern constitution, including a guarantee of human rights, including the right to not be unlawfully deprived of one’s liberty. This enabled the PNG High Court to rule that it was unconstitutional to detain refugees on Manus Island”.

Professor Triggs said she appreciated RAR’s objectives in Australia, the Asia Pacific region and internationally especially to dispel common myths in a post truth environment where government policy is driven by political ideology and personal advancement rather than evidence.

Current facts as at February 28, 2018:

- Australia: 3 children and 1,337 adults in detention.
- Nauru: 140 on Island, 30 children in detention, 309 adults in detention.
- Manus: 700
- Bridging visas in the community 18,783: Legacy of issues, instability and uncertainty, denies basic status, children present with mental and behavioural problems, long term issue for Australian community.

We can both protect our borders and national security while also acting according to the law and humanely in respect of those refugees that are now on Manus and Nauru, Christmas Island and mainland detention centres.

Duty of Care

Any discussion of the legal rights of asylum seekers should recognise that Australian law does offer protection under the law of tort and the Commonwealth’s duty of care. The severe conditions on Manus and Nauru, in particular, indicate a failure to meet this duty, including inadequately trained staff, understaffing, inadequate monitoring or preparation for an emergency, allegations of sexual harassment and assault, disease, poor hygiene, lack of access to appropriate quantities of water and poor mental health and medical care services.

It has not been easy to test whether the government's duty of care has been met because litigated claims are so frequently settled 'at the door of the court'. This means that, while some detainees will receive compensation, it is always 'without prejudice' to the legal merits of their claims

Australia has now joined the UN Human Rights Council in 2018. Engagement with the council may help persuade Australia's politicians that it is important to meet our international human rights obligations.

The recently elected Queensland government has repeated its commitment to the introduction of a Charter of Rights in its current legislative term. The road ahead may not be straight or smooth but a human rights act for Queensland has the potential, along with the current Charter of Rights in Victoria and the ACT, to build national momentum to enact a charter for all Australians.

A Charter of Rights for Australia will better protect the rights of citizens, minorities and non-citizens and ensure a culture of respect for the rights that underpin our democracy – freedom of speech, the right to vote and equality. Breaches of the rights of Indigenous people, juvenile detainees, asylum seekers, and the homeless, could be prevented if we enacted a federal Charter of Rights.

A Charter will also allow Australia to meet its international obligations and resume its leadership position globally and regionally as a good international citizen. Above all, Australia could return to the rule of law and to the principles of legality upon which our democracy is based. It is time.

Saturday 7 April

Stepping into the Future – Madeline Gleeson, Senior Research Associate Andrew and Renata Kaldor Centre for International Refugee Law

Change will come from the grassroots level. We cannot wait or trust that our politicians will amend our mistakes of the recent past, due to the unwavering bi-partisan support.

1. What to do about those in the 'legacy' caseload currently in Australia
 - a. Resolve questions about immigration status as quickly as possible with all due care taken
 - b. Permanent protection rather than the Bridging Visas or Temporary Protection Visas, to give certainty to people

2. What to do with those on off-shore processing
 - Resolve quickly
 - Some of the most critical and urgent cases, and Australia has the capacity to take them in here. This is a straightforward and easy solution
 - No demonstrable link between holding those on Nauru and Manus and stopping those trying to come to Australia by boat.
 - Legally and morally Australia has an obligation to those who have reached our shores
 - Legally, they are the Australian Government's responsibility, particularly under the UN Refugee Convention.
 - Morally our policies have deliberately further broken people who have already suffered.

- Bring them here and resolve immigration status later or resettle to US or New Zealand or any other viable option that presents.
 - ‘Double negative’s (those assessed to not be refugees and facing deportation back to home countries or staying in Nauru or Manus) should be reviewed by UNHCR.
 - Providing adequate settlement services
 - May need the help of refugee groups. Although these people are from diverse backgrounds, they have a shared experience of being on Manus or Nauru.
3. What should our immigration/refugee policy look like in the future
- Increased global needs to assist people seeking asylum.
 - Australia should be helping our neighbours with refugee policy, NOT SHIFTING OUR PROBLEMS ON TO THEM.
 - AUSTRALIA NEEDS MORAL CREDIBILITY before we can take a centre stage in a regional solution.

We need to change the focus from ‘the refugee issue’ as a concept, to a focus on THE PEOPLE.

Those from Manus/Nauru who have been brought to Australia for medical reasons are in limbo and can be returned at any time under the discretion of the Minister. There is no stability for their future.

Regional convention on refugees. Re-aligning the thoughts about Australia’s role, taking the lead in the region to assist our neighbours, as we have a greater capacity to take refugees and assist others.

Communities Working Together – Workshops

1. Rural Resettlement - Kevin Mack mayor of Albury, Anna Speedie mayor of Wodonga, Jenny O’Connor mayor of Indigo Shire
 - Anna Speedie - Wodonga
 - i. Albury is a Refugee Welcome Zone and all people should be treated equally and fairly.
 - ii. Albury / Wodonga has a long history of accepting migrants and refugees, such as Bonegilla
 - Jenny O’Connore - Indigo
 - i. Barriers include:
 1. Racism (fear) – we need to put a human face.
 - a. Homestay program, especially the unaccompanied young boys.
 - b. Opportunities to tell their stories – writers festival and other events
 2. Enough work

How do RARs make AGREEMENTS with local gov’ts?

- Send letter of each council to bring a motion such as MOU with RAR
- Wollongong green collection as an example of creating work for refugees

- If the noise from the community comes with solutions and with numbers, then council are more likely to listen and act.

Change minds through film – ‘Journey Beyond Fear’ – illusivetv@aol.com or 0402114384

Three Key Points

1. Rural Resettlement

- Local Government needs strong community voice to support refugees
- Community can drive the initiatives then get support from local government.
- Address racism in community and migrants.

2. Changing Hearts and Minds

- Network across electoral boundaries and plan a strategy for elections months ahead
- Events that include all the community and are fun.
- A short clear research based message on Alternative Refugee policy especially dealing with causes of refugees displacement

3. Welcoming Refugees

- People who arrive in Australia as Refugees or come seeking asylum are all humans and they respond to human actions and compassion eg a smile, a meal, friendship, help with basic necessities and education.
- All asylum seekers and refugees are individuals and we must recognise their cultural differences. their different educational backgrounds, level of trauma, English language proficiency etc. These differences mean very different supports are needed and also represent much cultural diversity.
- Country and regional areas could be reinvigorated with industries where asylum seekers (particularly those with SHEV's) and refugees could work. Housing, jobs and community could benefit asylum seekers and refugees as well as help country areas.

4. Home Hosting

- Rural communities have a unique role to play in intercultural education, in healing and in supportive relationship building for refugees and asylum seekers.
- There is a great deal of knowledge and experience in the home hosting area and this knowledge needs to be shared and not reinvented. The RAR to play a key role as a central hub of information sharing and connection.
- We work together slowly to build strong connections with referring agencies and provide a safe supported form of advocacy.

The Challenges Faced by Vulnerable People...sharing the message – Saba Vasefi

Question: Who is worthy in the mirror of stereotype?

Worthiness, access and choice. If society deems that someone is worthy, they have access and choices. In the media, IF a minority is depicted, it is usually in a sub-ordinate position.

(e.g. Australian Women's Weekly photo of panel of women with minority woman sitting on the floor).

Refugee women have already removed the disrespect, humiliation and helplessness by escaping the injustice of their home country. Now they need to be respected and included in the debate.

Film 'Waiting for Dad' by Saba Vasefi

Effective Use of the Media – Workshops

1. Social Media

- Use emotion, back up with facts.
- Use hashtags
- Hide trolls immediately

2. Media in Regional and Rural Communities

- Personal relationships with journalists
- Well crafted images, tactics and “angles”.
- Keep it short, unemotional, maintain objectivity

3. Key to Successful Campaigning

- Relationships -Community events- local MP take whole family-homestays
- Education – schools-postcards to MP -accurate information
- Activism – vigils-policies to politicians-media column (positive)-fundraising-targeting influential people

4. The Power of Story Telling – Para Paheer, Alison Corke, Apollo Bay RAR (facilitator)

- Work with Schools- make computer games-story tree with items on tree-story writing competition- suitable books on school curriculum.
- Work with mainstream media-try to get a column/week in media in ?Guardian, ?Saturday Paper ?pay for column
- Social Media -sharing refugee stories well organised not haphazard.
- Travelling festivals to country areas with speakers, films, music and books.

Book – The Power of Good People, Para Paheer (Wild Dingo Press)

Para has worked as cultural support worker in Nauru

- How to tell the story
 - Social media
 - Have Behrouz's stories shared weekly
 - Power of telling story together
 - Breaks through the barrier of empathy
 - Work with young people

Lunchtime Meeting Key to Successful Campaigning (follow up)

5 Ps

- Passion
- Possibilities
- Practical Action
- Partnerships (develop with others in the community)
- Perseverance

Australia is a Compassionate Country for Refugees – Debate

Albury High School (Affirmative) v Scots (Negative)

This debate adjudicated by Julian Burnside was won narrowly by Scots.

Congratulations to all the students and teaching staff involved.

A Voice for Youth for a Positive Future – Julian Burnside

To know where you are going you must know where you have been i.e. must know what has happened in the past.

Look back to see where you are going

Two topics to be discussed today:

1. Climate Change
 - a. Carl Sagan, Cosmos and the cosmic calendar (the history of the universe condensed down to 12 months)

2. Human Rights
 - a. Really began to emerge after WW2 and the holocaust.
 - b. Eleanor Roosevelt and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, was adopted by the General Assembly of the United Nations on 10 Dec 1948 and was presented by an Australian, H.V. Evatt.
 - c. 11 Sept 2001 – things changed dramatically, and the US response of finding false reasons to invade Iraq. The 9/11 bombers were all Saudi Arabians,
 - i. Tampa happened only hours before the 9/11 attack and John Howard linked middle easterners as terrorists and thus the turning back of Tampa was falsely portrayed as a “good thing”.
 - d. Book: East West Street by Phillippe Sands, on the origins of “genocide” and “crimes against humanity”
 - e. NRA was very powerful after each mass shooting came out and said ‘now is not the time to discuss these things’.
 - i. Quote from Emma Gonzalez’s speech at the Fort Lauderdale rally “If there is a book that you want to read that hasn’t been written yet, then you must be the one to write it.” Toni Morrison

Supporting Young Australians – Workshops

1. **Involving Young Australians**
 - a. Josh – arranged to have a refugee speak at his school
 - i. Penny Vine -Murray Valley Sanctuary Refugee Group president
 - ii. Letter-writing drive after refugee spoke to school
 - iii. Having refugee speak was so much more powerful than having a white Anglo-Saxon, no matter how good the speech.
 - b. Jackie
 - i. How you engage a young person in an issue?
 1. Social – people think that youth are too busy with their social life, but we all connect on a social level and are influenced by who we associate with.

2. Young people not interested? It is more a case of not knowing
What can we do? where can we start?
 3. More education in schools about the political system
 4. Someone taking an interest in a young person and their interests
 5. Gap of info and barrier of disseminating facts, social media can help to break through
- c. Using social media with clips no longer than 5 min.
 - d. Listen to their ideas, not just have them fit in with how things have always been done.
 - e. Be a positive influence on young people
 - f. Make connections
 - g. Look at their interests and do something in their sphere, i.e. art or sport etc.
1. **Involving Young Australians**
 - **More education in schools with refugees telling their stories**
 - **Increase social awareness and education in politics in schools (if you know how something works change can be made)**
 - **If young people have ideas support them to 'have a go' look at their passions and interest and instill it**
 2. **Involving Young Refugees and Asylum Seekers**
 - **Support = education, financial, mental health**
 - **Not just story tellers, support career goals, job opportunities, networking.**
 - **Provide mentorship plus capacity building.**
 3. **Youth Campaigning for Change**
Change comes after taking risks
 - **Older and younger generation work together. Refugee youths with more responsibilities. Establish cross-cultural communication and teach others about refugees.**
 - **Refugees are part of the solution. New and positive image of refugees to replace the desperate ones. Australians can learn from refugees.**
 - **Exploration of new horizons for campaigning for change, film, social media, welcome dinners etc.**
 4. **The future we want for our kids**
 - **Parental modelling**
 - **Whole Community is responsible for raising a child**
 - **Face the future before it happens.**

Report Back from Workshops

- Amnesty International is a supporter of RAR
 - New strategy "My new neighbour" – a call to expand community sponsorship
- Aireys Inlet
 - Resettlement in US

Sunday 8 April 2018

Breakfast meetings

1. Non Violent Activism – Sr Jan Barnett, jan.barnett@sosj.org.au
 - a. Jan Barnett
 - i. At a peaceful protest, hold a candle or give out flowers, it makes the group less threatening
 - ii. Define the problem (must be knowledgeable about the topic), sell the solution and call to action
 - iii. One day each year all catholic schools in the network do something to highlight refugees, and to write an article for local paper. Very powerful as it happens across the country on one day.
 - iv. Examples:
 1. Gosford Anglican Church message board
 2. Politicians sit ins on a weekly basis
 3. Rallies
 4. Pax Christi – int'l org
 5. Commongrace.org.au – letters to Malcolm Turnbull from mothers on Mothers Day
 6. Give questions to local Federal member to ask in parliament, or write letters to department and ask questions, to which they MUST respond, and if they don't you can go to Fed member to follow up
 7. Tombstones for each person who has died on Manus or Nauru
 8. Tue 'mourning' – wear a black armband to mourn those who have died on Manus / Nauru
 9. Moss report video – Mount St Benedict school (in Bernard Hills) the kids read statements from children on Nauru.
 10. I always thought we were better than this video wbttaus.org (website no longer active)
 - b. Love makes a way
 - i. Strategic Non Violent Action – determine what the pillars that are holding up the 'problem', and find a specific way to withdraw support
 - ii. Actions should be SMART
 - iii. Circle of silence
 1. A group of people standing in a circle around an issue, in a public way
 2. Every 5 min ring a bell and tell a story – personal connection
 3. Someone on the outside to hand out fliers
 4. Non-confrontational
2. Discussion on World Refugee Problem and the role of rural Australia – Susan York Kneebone and Amnesty
 3. "If you're not at the table you're on the menu": RAR national advocacy on refugee sponsorship and resettlement – Margaret Rasa RAR National Executive

Information to follow.

'A Compassionate Country'

Song by local musician Linda Simpson

<https://youtu.be/-re3JgvnjJk>

Transformational Thinking, Planning for the future' – Emeritus Professor Stuart Hill

Email: s.hill@westernsydney.edu.au

website: <http://www.zulenet.com/see/chair.html>

A deep leadership – social ecology – psychosocial perspective

- Take a moment to remember a place, experience, time in nature where/when life was 'perfect'
- New approaches for effective visioning, goal setting and action
- There are various components in society that are active society (ie business, community, government.) Government always follows business. It probably makes more sense to be influencing BUSINESS.
- Organizational transformation requires individual transformation
- A 'life-enabling' triple bottom line: environment, socio-cultural, people. Economics has become the top level (socio-cultural level) ie we will be good environmental/cultural people when we can afford it.
- Establishment of compensatory selves
 - We end up with two sets of selves
 - Conscious, aware selves
 - Adaptive - this is the 'person' we need to communicate with
 - When confronted with a person with a tragedy, don't try to solve the issue, say 'tell me more', and then 'tell me some more'. The issue that people start with is almost never the thing that is the biggest issue.
- We are essentially social creatures.
- Levels of consideration for effective action
 - Action
- 5 overlapping stages in change
- 5 decisions to make re any change
- By allowing someone to lie, it allows them to be creative in their approach to a vision of what they want.

ADOPT A POLITICIAN AND TREAT THEM AS IF THEY ARE A CHILD THAT HASN'T BEEN RAISED CORRECTLY. Give them positive feedback, ask them strategic questions etc.

'Positive Engagement with Politicians' – Senator Nick McKim: Tasmania, Cathy McGowan: Indi, talk with Margaret Rasa RAR National Executive

Cathy McGowan:

1. How to get change – quotes to remember
 - a. Be the change you want to see
 - b. Think globally, work locally

- c. They tried to bury us, but they didn't know we were seeds
 - d. I do not know what will happen when I die, and I do not want to know. But I hope that from the clay of my death, the potter makes a whistle from my throat and it goes to a naughty boy who blows the whistle at night and keeps awake all those who were deaf to my cries – from an Iranian refugee
2. Letter from Minister from Home Affairs Peter Dutton
 - a. Cathy approached Peter Dutton in the hallway and asked him something he could say yes to. She asked if he would pass on a message to the RAR conference, and he said yes! He thanked rural and regional Australians for their work and assistance in settling migrants and refugees, and thanked Cathy for her ongoing support in this area and looks forward to working with her in the future (the lie!). This allows Cathy to take a message from us back to Peter Dutton
 - b. Politics doesn't work if you are cynical, it works when you are your best self, and when you are there for the long term.

Nick McKim:

- Politics is about relationships
 - Build relationships with the politicians AND THEIR STAFF
 - We live in a democracy
 - That means that THE PEOPLE are running the country, with YOUR VOTE.
 - Exercise your power (vote) and DO NOT be afraid to tell people that you will be exercising your power.
 - Labor is the fracture point on Refugee policy
 - How do we shift Labor?
 - National Conference later this year
 - Start targeting NOW for election next year
 - To those who are refugee compassionate and stand up to say it, thank them and ASK THEM TO VOTE WITH THEIR COMPASSION and cross the floor. This will be a fracture point.
 - Quote: You fight, and you fight and you fight, and you never give up

Quote from Chief of Staff for Kim Beasley during Tampa incident: “YOU HAVE TO START FROM THE POINT OF WHAT THEY ARE DOING WELL”

Tampa Award

Presented to an individual who had made a selfless and substantial contribution to the welfare of refugees

2018 award goes to Behrouz Bouchani.

'Refugee Settlement' – Professor Susan York Kneebone

How did we lose our heart and how do we reclaim it?

- Enlisting the Community 1950-99

- The Good Neighbour movement
- Migrant Resource Centres
- Community Refugee Resettlement Scheme
- Progressive ‘neo-liberal policies focus on the ‘consumer-citizen’
 - 1997-2011: Integrated Humanitarian Settlement Strategy
 - Humanitarian Settlement Service and Complex Case Support Services
- Put into context of...
 - Development of the Refugee and Humanitarian Program – from the Indo-China war 1975 to Ruddock 1997
 - Development of the Refugee and Humanitarian Program, 1997-onwards
 - Development of immigration policy \Migration Act 1989 – emphasis on skilled migration \ de-emphasis on family unity \ migration
 - Securitisation of the refugee
- Privatising state responsibility
 - June 2013 – June 2016 Community Proposal Pilot
 - Community Refugee Sponsorship Trial Begins
 - For the first time community organisation such as ethnic groups, church groups and NGOs can nominate people at risk in overseas
- Based on the Canadian system

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Summary of conference and future actions – Bellingen RAR, Southern Highlands RAR, Aireys Inlet RAR

- Wodonga Bill of Rights
 - Declaration from the floor of the conference
 - ‘There is an urgent need for an Australian Charter of Human Rights which recognises that all people are born free and equal in dignity and rights. We call for The Parliament of Australia to meet, protect, and uphold our legal and moral obligations under International human rights conventions and human rights laws.’
 - Carried unanimously
 - Take this personally, and take back to our groups
- Blue Mountains
- Draft Refugee Policy from 2018 Conference

Australia needs to regain its moral credibility by the following:

- Recognise that people who arrive in Australia by using people smugglers are human beings who need help.
- End offshore detention. Resettle in Australia those found to be refugees.
- End mandatory detention of asylum seekers, while allowing for detention if exceptional circumstances are shown. Treat detainees with respect, not as criminals. Do not separate families unless exceptional circumstances exist.

- Process refugee and visa claims in a timely, efficient and consistent manner. Simplify the visa system and grant only permanent visas,
- Use the Universal Declaration of Human Rights 1948 as a guiding principle in framing refugee policy.
- Use the UN Refugee Convention 1951 as the yardstick for determining refugee status.
- Never deport asylum seekers to danger.

An alternative to our current deterrent policy would:

1. Address the causes for people becoming refugees. Use our diplomatic, trade and aid muscle to leverage better treatment of persecuted minorities in our region.
2. Work with our regional neighbours currently hosting refugees, to provide Australian aid for safety, support, education and work rights.
3. Support the 2018 UN Global Compact on Refugees. Fund UNHCR to set up more processing centres for those applying for refugee status and visas in our region.
4. Increase our refugee intake.

The Conference closed with a breathtaking display of African singing and dancing led by Faida.