

# REFUGEE ACTION COLLECTIVE (VIC)

## WHAT YOU CAN DO:

Thousands of people are rallying across the country to protest the murder of Reza Berati and the brutal injustice of offshore processing. The protests have been big, strong, loud and diverse. They show the scale of the opposition to Abbott's "Operation Sovereign Borders" and the potential to build a campaign that can win.

Scott Morrison is under intense pressure. He has had to admit that the attacks against refugees on Manus were inside the detention centre, and had been undertaken by G4S guards. He won't rule out closing Manus detention centre.

The failure of shadow immigration minister Richard Marles to call for the closure of Manus detention centre and for Morrison to be sacked is shameful. Instead of opposing Abbott's refugee policies, the ALP leadership is clinging onto its PNG "solution", the policy that ultimately put Reza Berati on Manus to begin with.

### Shifting Public Opinion

Shifting public opinion is key to building the opposition that can force the government to close Manus and end offshore processing.

The refugee movement has done this before. Under Howard, the grassroots campaign swung public opinion. Between 2001 and 2004, the number of people who thought some or all asylum boats should be able to land in Australia went from 47 per cent to 61 per cent.

By 2004, the government was forced to ease conditions in detention. Many long-term refugees were released—albeit on less than adequate "return pending" visas. Children and families were also released from detention. By 2007, Rudd-Labor was forced to end offshore processing.

The sprouting of local action networks, Writers for Refugees, Secondary Students for Refugee Rights, Seniors For a More Just Australia are excellent signs that we are developing the kind of broad and deep networks we will need.

We need to keep up the mobilisations on the streets and at the detention centres. These build

momentum. The public, powerful, mass solidarity with refugees punctures the government's anti-refugee racism.

### Union Campaigning

Many within the union movement hate the ALP refugee policy. Michelle O'Neil, President of Textile Footwear and Clothing Union (TFCU) condemned the ALP leadership for its utter moral bankruptcy over refugees. "That's no representative of mine," she said of Shadow Immigration Minister Richard Marles, "We need a genuine opposition. We need outrage. We need voices of protest at the highest level... all of those who call themselves leaders must lead!"

By winning support inside unions and the working class we can deepen the opposition to anti-refugee policies. We can also more effectively isolate Shorten and Marles' disgraceful refugee-bashing.

Under Howard, union connections meant that we distributed refugee material on jobs and published in union journals. We mobilised contingents from unions and also pushed for union action at the airports to stop deportations.

### Fight to Change Policy – Welcome the boats

We need to turn the fantastic mobilisations into a sustained campaign that won't stop until all the policies that are behind the obvious atrocities are dismantled. The starting point for refugee policy must be to welcome the boats.

The Liberals have now approached Cambodia to take refugees seeking asylum in Australia. Manus must close, but not be replaced with a new horror forced on refugees.

As long as the government is committed to deterring refugees and punishing refugees who arrive by boat, through policies like offshore processing, anti-people smuggling legislation and mandatory detention, the more the atrocities like those that erupted on Manus will continue.

We need to insist on our demands that it is not a crime to seek asylum and that the public welcomes the boats.



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#### For Union Members

If you are a member of a union, you can play an important role in building active rank-and-file opposition to Abbott and Shorten's policies.

\*Put forward motions of support for refugee rallies to open up discussion and debate about the issue.

\*Bring a contingent of unionists to the Palm Sunday mobilisation. Ring your union to get flags. Union contingents at rallies are a sign for members of the public- and for the politicians- that the anger is broad and deep.

\*Invite a Refugee speaker to your next union meeting. RAC can put you in touch with someone who will help explain the realities for those who are unconvinced to join you in taking action.

#### In your local area

\*Collect some posters from the Refugee Action Collective and stick them up in your local cafes and main streets.

\*Hold a street stall with your neighbours, handing out information and leaflets. RAC can provide help with material and on the stall.

\*Set up a local Refugee Action Group. You can put on regular stalls, local actions, public information forums.

\*Organise a forum or film screening. RAC can help with speakers and films.

#### At your work place, community centre, place of worship or school

\*Pass around a petition- contact RAC for the latest petitions.

\*Wear a "Welcome Refugees" badge, and encourage others too as well.

\*Build a delegation to come to the next demonstration.

\*Put up a poster for the next demonstration in the staff room or notice board.

#### For everyone

Get involved in the Refugee Action Collective. We need a broad campaign group to help organise the demonstrations, forums, information sheets, media releases, street stalls and more. We need to hear feedback from the community to know which issues need to be pushed further, which arguments hit a nerve. We need you!

RAC meets every Monday at 6.30pm at ANF House, 540 Elizabeth St City

**Web:** [www.rac-vic.org](http://www.rac-vic.org)

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**WALK for**  
**JUSTICE**  
**for**  
**REFUGEES**  
**PALM SUNDAY MARCH**  
**2pm, April 13, State Library**  
corner Swanston & La Trobe Sts Melbourne

organised by: Victorian Council of Churches, The Greens, Labor for Refugees, ETU, Trades Hall, bsp, act for peace, RESULT, Australian Churches Refugee Taskforce, UWSU, United Church in Australia, call Chris 0465 013 183 or Maria 0469 252 673 for more info - [refugeeactioncollective.org](http://refugeeactioncollective.org)