

Trade unions are about standing up for what is fair

Trade Unions have a proud history of standing up for human rights and persecuted minorities. Our movement includes many people from refugee backgrounds. The Turnbull government is pushing an anti-union agenda on the back of kicking refugees. By calling refugees terrorists, or scapegoating them for unemployment or service cuts politicians try to deflect our anger away from their corporate tax cuts, unfair industrial laws, and the sell off of public services. But when working people stand up for refugee rights, we kick away the racist crutch that holds up Liberal governments and the unfair policies that dehumanise us all.

Scrap offshore processing, not penalty rates

The Coalition has spent \$10 billion over 4 years on offshore prisons while savaging health, education, and workers rights. Asylum seekers could be processed quickly in the community with work rights (the case pre-1992) for less than a tenth of this cost.

Change the rules for refugees

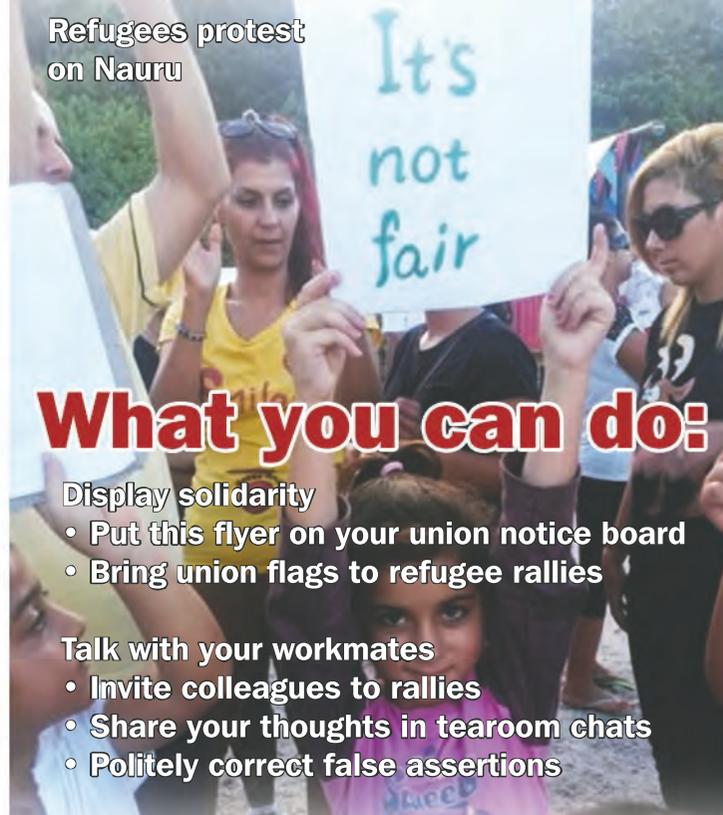
The rules for refugees are broken just like the rules for workers. Unions will rightly fight the Coalition and put pressure on the ALP to 'Change the Rules' for workers. Union action could also break the cruel and racist rules for refugees.

Aran's story:

Aran Mylvaganam was 11 years old when his school was bombed by the Sri Lankan Air Force. His brother and some of his school friends were killed. After being separated from his parents, he came to Australia by boat as an unaccompanied 13-year-old. He spent 3 months in detention. Today he works as an organiser with the Financial Sector Union.



Refugees protest on Nauru



What you can do:

Display solidarity

- Put this flyer on your union notice board
- Bring union flags to refugee rallies

Talk with your workmates

- Invite colleagues to rallies
- Share your thoughts in tearoom chats
- Politely correct false assertions

Pass this motion in your union branch

This meeting of _____

- supports ACTU refugee policy
- calls on the Australian Government to refrain from deporting asylum seekers to Iraq, Sri Lanka, Afghanistan, or elsewhere to danger,
- notes that offshore processing means refugees under Australian care have been detained indefinitely in countries where their safety cannot be guaranteed. We therefore call on the government to end offshore processing, and bring the refugees and asylum seekers on Manus and Nauru to Australia

Have the Refugee Action Collective arrange a speaker for your workplace or union:

Call Chris 0403 013 183, email refugeeactioncollective@gmail.com or visit www.rac-vic.org for more info

Refugees are a union issue

Change the rules for refugees



DON'T DEPORT TO DANGER

ACTU policy on forced deportations:

“Congress opposes the forcible deportation of asylum seekers. In numerous past cases, such removal has resulted in imprisonment, torture, and in some cases, death. The ACTU will coordinate a union response to the issue of the forced removal of asylum seekers.”

Australia continues to deport asylum seekers back to places like Iraq, Syria, Sri Lanka and Afghanistan, thousands of asylum seekers here remain at risk.

In 2011, the Edmund Rice Centre found that of 179 refugees forcibly returned to Afghanistan 20 had been confirmed killed and dozens more had disappeared. An update in July 2017 concluded “it would be impossible for Australian, European and other governments to guarantee the safety of Afghan returnees in this period of instability”.

Over 1600 Tamils have been deported to danger. Many were subject to ‘enhanced screening’, a short initial interview that can see asylum seekers deported without being allowed to make asylum claims. Those returned get prison sentences, some have been tortured, some have disappeared.

Deportation is a brutal process often involving physical or chemical restraint. In 1998 the Transport Workers Union stopped the deportation of a Somali asylum seeker. Unionised German pilots refused to deport asylum seekers 222 times in 2017. Two deportations from Australia have been stopped by passengers refusing to sit, one of whom told the ABC ‘People need to know if they stand up for what they believe in they can make a change’.

Union members taking action:

Lady Cilento Children’s Hospital

In 2016 nurses and doctors in Brisbane refused to discharge Baby Asha back to detention after she was treated for burns suffered on Nauru. Their action along with a mass union blockade of the hospital helped win the Let Them Stay campaign. Over 300 refugees brought to Australia for medical treatment offshore remain as a result. The government does not dare send them back.

Teachers strike for detained student

Teachers at Brisbane’s Yeronga State High School went on strike when an asylum seeker student, Mojgan Shamsalipoor, was ripped out of their school into detention. After a year-long campaign Mojgan was released from detention.

Health workers beat the Border Force Act

Workers forced the federal government to back down on laws banning them from publicly revealing abuse in Australia’s offshore detention centres. Health professionals were made exempt from the Act after sustained protest and defiance made it a dead letter. The Act has never been used.

CHANGE THE RULES!

Many of the actions above were technically “illegal” and workers risked dismissal, fines, &/or jail for their actions. Workers must have the right to take industrial action for political as well as economic reasons.

BRING THEM HERE! - don’t dump refugees offshore

Asylum seekers are not ‘illegals’

The right to claim asylum by any means of travel is in Australian law and in the 1951 UN Convention on Refugees. Despite this, refugees who arrived by boat since 13 August 2013 have spent almost five years detained on Nauru and Manus Island, Papua New Guinea, in squalid inhuman conditions with no clear future. They are denied appropriate medical care and over half have developed mental health problems. In 2016, Amnesty International reported that conditions for refugees ‘amount to torture’. 150 children, many of whom often don’t go to school, remain on Nauru.

The Supreme Court of PNG ruled that Manus

detention centre was illegal in 2016. But in late 2017 the men on Manus were starved, denied water, beaten and forced to a new location. They are still prisoners on Manus. There have been brutal attacks on asylum seekers and refugees by some locals and police. Women have been raped, and children abused on Nauru. Ten people have died offshore from treatable infections, suicide and murder.

What about New Zealand and the US deal?

The Coalition government has refused New Zealand’s offering to resettle 150 refugees a year. The US refugee deal is a result of the refugee movement’s pressure yet it is tortuously slow. Out of 2000 only 85 refugees from Manus and 146 from Nauru have been resettled. Even if the deal is ever completed Border Force has admitted that 500 refugees would be left behind. People from countries covered by Trump’s racist travel ban, are not being accepted to go to the US. Australia forced the refugees offshore, it can bring them back here, this is the real solution.