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| |  |  | | --- | --- | | |  | | --- | | **16 November 2022**  **Next Meeting - our final for this year!  Our November online meeting takes place next Wednesday 23rd at 6.30pm. Members will be sent the Zoom link for the meeting.**  **The link to the minutes of last month's meeting is**[*L4RMinutes26Oct22*](https://facebook.us7.list-manage.com/track/click?u=09c48b6cba9909c3558998ce0&id=5a581fab5c&e=ba8211a97d)    **Thanks again**  **Thank you to those generous members who kindly donated to Labor for Refugees NSW/ACT over the last few months.  Our group can now feel confident of being able to carry out our tasks without being concerned that we'll run out of funds.**  **L4R's meeting with the Immigration Minister**  **After our L4R national representatives met with Immigration Minister Andrew Giles in Canberra on Monday 26 September last**[*L4RmtgImmigMin26Sep22REPORT*](https://facebook.us7.list-manage.com/track/click?u=09c48b6cba9909c3558998ce0&id=7c471f74ac&e=ba8211a97d)**our NSW-ACT and National Co-Convenor Shane Prince is having a follow up meeting with the Minister in Sydney today, to establish if there is any progress on the issues we raised with the Minister and for an update on the implementation of the government's refugee policies.**    **You may recall from our last newsletter, that we were patiently waiting for an announcement to be made soon about refugees/people seeking asylum, especially for those on TPVs (Temporary Protection Visas), SHEVs (Safe Haven Enterprise Visas) and possibly others, to be transferred to permanency.**    **On 13 November last, it was reported in the media that the Home Affairs Minister Clare O'Neil reaffirmed a decision to scrap temporary protection visas, but has yet to commit to a time frame for the move.  We are still waiting.  Immigration Review**  **Home Affairs Minister O'Neil has appointed a panel to carry out a review of Australia’s immigration systems and will present recommendations by February 2023.  The Minister cited a backlog of one million unprocessed visas when Labor took office and said a recent investigation by the Nine newspapers has revealed ‘systemic abuses’ of the visa system.   Minister O'Neil said there was desire for people on the temporary visas to have permanency but that the process to scrap the visas would take time. She acknowledged that a number of people living in Australia on temporary protection visas have been here for more than a decade.  She told the ABC's Insiders program last Sunday that "We are working through it slowly and carefully." The Minister said the review would be critical for the country's workforce, describing the system as it stands as complex and expensive. "We've got enormous complexity in the system, literally hundreds of different visa categories and sub-categories."  Long wait times for visa processing will also come into the spotlight as part of the review. Minister O'Neil said the processing times needed to be examined. Some were taking two or three years. She said the review would help to make Australia more competitive for overseas workers at a time of employee shortages. "We've spent almost the whole of the last decade in a big conversation about immigration about how to keep people out of our country," Ms O'Neil said.  Earlier this year, the government increased the permanent migration cap from 160,000 to 195,000 per year, following pressure on workforce numbers.**    **We hope that by the time we hold our meeting next week, we'll have something positive to report after Shane's meeting with Andrew Giles. Offshore Processing Contract on Nauru  As reported in our last newsletter, the Secretary wrote to the Home Affairs Minister on the 17 August, re the contract on Nauru for Canstruct which expired at the end of September. She expressed concern that the Government was looking at replacing it with a “preferred tenderer” call MTC Australia, an Australian arm of a US private prisons company.   A  follow-up letter was sent to the Minister on 5 September, with a copy forwarded to ACTU Secretary Sally McManus, asking Sally if the Minister had consulted with the appropriate trade union, which Labor's Platform states should be done.  The Secretary also wrote to the United Workers Union (UWU). The union’s National President, Jo Schofield, followed up with a letter to Clare O’Neil***[UWUlettertoMinO'NeilreMTCforNauru](https://facebook.us7.list-manage.com/track/click?u=09c48b6cba9909c3558998ce0&id=3f74c6872f&e=ba8211a97d" \t "_blank)***.  The Union letter emphasized MTC Australia's appalling record and demanded *“that the Home affairs Dept immediately pause any negotiations with Managing and Training Corporation so that more suitable management may be found”.***  **After receiving no response from Clare O'Neill, we followed up with the union, suggesting the USU send a second letter, referring Minister O’Neil to the United Nations “Global Compact” which outlines ten principles.   We requested that the UWU urge the Minister to ask MTC Australia, whether it has been compliant with the principles that are outlined in the Compact**[https://www.unglobalcompact.org/what-is-gc/mission/principles](https://facebook.us7.list-manage.com/track/click?u=09c48b6cba9909c3558998ce0&id=0f3461afbd&e=ba8211a97d)**We believe that MTC Australia has not been compliant after it was taken to court by the Arizona Governor to cancel an MTC contract for ‘a culture of disorganisation, disengagement and disregard for state policies’.  MTC has also had action taken against it for its treatment of women and people of colour in its facilities, including unconscionable periods of solitary confinement and sexual assault.   Apart from the breach of Labor’s Platform which states that Labor must consult with the relevant trade union before entering into such a contract, it is simply unethical to do business with such a disreputable company which has such a poor record of human rights violations.**    **Petition EN4612 - Study and work rights equity for asylum seekers**  **We are trying to raise support for this issue with a petition, as it is having widespread impacts on the legacy caseload cohort who are losing their study and work rights when they go to get their visa renewed, leaving them to rely on charities.  Charities have little left to give.    The petition reads as follows:   Petition Reason People living in Australia on Bridging Visas are being denied the opportunity to study or work once they turn 18 years old. The Department of Immigration officers are applying inconsistent "policy" denying people seeking asylum the opportunity to work or study while living in Australia. This means when some asylum seekers reach the age of 18, they have no further opportunity for study (some having already commenced tertiary study) and are prevented by their visas terms from seeking employment.  Petition Request We therefore ask the House to support whatever changes may be required to the HECS and other education legislation to allow the Minister for Immigration to address this inconsistent approach to Bridging Visas (BVEs) to include study and work rights as a matter of course when granting the visas.   The link to the petition follows:**[https://www.aph.gov.au/e-petitions/petition/EN4612](https://facebook.us7.list-manage.com/track/click?u=09c48b6cba9909c3558998ce0&id=d65e5fbaf0&e=ba8211a97d) **Please sign it and spread the word.**  **Community Refugee Sponsorship Australia (CRSA)**  **We recently received a letter from an independent national charity inspired by Canada’s successful community sponsorship, asking for groups of volunteers who live in the same area, who are willing to be trained, to be matched with refugee households who are soon to arrive having been selected for resettlement by UNHCR and the Australian Govt.  They are seeking support for this initiative and asked us to promotion their activities to our members with the hope of raising awareness.  They stated that they believe Australians are very generous and welcoming and many will potentially support this initiative but may be unaware of it.**    **This endeavour relies on volunteers but is very different to traditional 'volunteering'.  CRSA seeks to mobilise and train groups of five or more adults who live in the same area and then match them with refugee households settling here.  Having done that, it's up to these local groups of people to provide holistic support to the household in an independent, organic and self-directed way, guided by their common sense, personal know-how and belief in the value of welcoming refugees into our communities. This**[SHOT VIDEO](https://facebook.us7.list-manage.com/track/click?u=09c48b6cba9909c3558998ce0&id=1a44c1a893&e=ba8211a97d)**shows what this approach looks like in practice.**  **These groups can comprise of family members, friends, neighbours, members of local clubs or faith organisations or groups of co-workers who get involved through their employers - any combination can work and will provide refugee newcomers with access to support from a group of people with diverse skills, knowledge and networks.**    **If you are interested in participating in this program, please go to the link**<https://refugeesponsorship.org.au/what-we-do/crisp/>**and take the next steps.**    **Regards**  **Nizza Siano Secretary L4R NSW email:**[*contact@labor4refugees.com*](mailto:contact@labor4refugees.com) | | |