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| L4R newsletter - keeping you informed and up to date on our current issues and challenges. | Is this email not displaying correctly?[View it in your browser](https://mailchi.mp/587d8ceec8cc/reforming-labors-refugee-policies-at-national-conference?e=f705cf268c).  |

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| Labor for Refugees New South Wales |

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| **19 July 2023**  **You are invited to attend our next meetingOur next meeting will be held on WEDNESDAY 26 JULY 2023 AT 6.30PM.****Please join Labor for Refugees and receive the link for our meeting.The Minutes of our last meeting follow**[*MinutesL4RNSW-ACT28June23*](https://facebook.us7.list-manage.com/track/click?u=09c48b6cba9909c3558998ce0&id=457deab08f&e=f705cf268c)  **L4R motion can now be submitted to ALP National Conference as an amendment****The following refugee motion**[*L4RNSW-ACTmotionforALPNatCon2023*](https://facebook.us7.list-manage.com/track/click?u=09c48b6cba9909c3558998ce0&id=69c0e0bdef&e=f705cf268c)**, endorsed by a number of branches and FECs, can now be submitted as an amendment to the final Draft Platform.  The final draft platform was released to delegates yesterday, which is the required one month before conference and they can now submit amendments through a special delegate page on the conference website.  Only national conference delegates can submit amendments (I assumed branch secretaries could do so but that's not the case).  That means you should find out who your elected FEC delegate is and urge her/him to submit our L4R motion as an amendment to Labor's final Draft Platform. Please send your delegate a copy of our refugee motion.****I am also perplexed why all ALP members are not privy to the final Draft Platform which will be debated at the National Conference.  After all, we all had the opportunity to make submissions to the National Policy Forum (NPF)  back in May this year to amend the Draft Platform (see the link to our submission below), yet we are prevented from accessing it so that we can examine the final draft version adopted by the NPF.  Only conference delegates can access it.****Submission to the ALP National Policy Forum on Draft 2023 Platform****Labor for Refugees sent a submission to the National Policy Forum, amending some of the clauses in the Draft Platform.  Party members were invited to make contributions with the closing date being the 23 June 2023.The main section, that dealt with refugees, appeared in Chapter 7 under "Statements in Detail - A Nation Built on Migration".  The final draft will be debated at the 49th ALP National Conference to be held in Brisbane 17-19 August 2023, before a 2023 National Platform is adopted.Our submission dated 23 June 2023 follows:**[*L4RNSW-ACTsubmissiontoDftPlatform2023*](https://facebook.us7.list-manage.com/track/click?u=09c48b6cba9909c3558998ce0&id=9505e8ca47&e=f705cf268c)**Note that L4R Victoria and L4R Queensland made separate submissions to the NPF.Since then, we have had a few additional points of concern raised with us.   It was pointed out that in the draft platform, the Party removed the reference to *"ABOLISHING TEMPORARY VISAS"* and has shifted to:*"Temporary Protection Visas place refugees in an ongoing State of uncertainty and prevent meaningful settlement, creating hardship for refugees and denying Australia the benefit of their contribution, which is why Labor has transitioned holders to permanency."* Another issue of concern is the use of HOTELS AS ALTERNATIVE PLACES OF DETENTION (APODs) L4R Victoria, in its submission to the National Policy Forum on the Draft 2023 ALP National Platform, pointed out that the addition of a new Clause Clause 7 (h) “*Use of hotel- like accommodation as an alternative place of Detention”*was concerning.In their submission, L4R Vic stated that:*"Over the past few years we have seen a massive dereliction of duty involved in detaining persons who had been granted Refugee status in totally inadequate and unsafe hotel accommodation under the Coalition Government. This has included persons awarded Refugee status who have been detained on offshore sites and transferred under the Medivac arrangements on health needs grounds who not only received no health care but were detained for prolonged periods in conditions that further affected their physical and mental health.* *We have also seen the massive public policy failures involved with using hotel accommodation as inadequate Quarantine facilities during the height of the Covid pandemic.**L4R (Vic) members from direct experience are painfully aware of the shocking conditions and situation for the refugees who were detained for prolonged periods at the Park Hotel in Melbourne.**On these grounds we are thus concerned to see a new clause appearing in the draft 2023 Platform endorsing the use of “hotel like accommodation as an alternative place of detention”.*L4R NSW-ACT members agree that this clause should not be included in Labor's 2023 National Platform.Treehouse Theatre team visits L4RGeorge Rosier, L4R member and the Co-Founder and Vice-President of the Treehouse theatre, together with his wife Catherine Maguire-Donvito, L4R member and a Co-Founder and Director of the Treehouse Theatre addressed the meeting.  Catherine is also a psychologist and school counsellor.  Also present was Martin Hartcher, President of the Treehouse Theatre.  The Patron of the theatre is Australian journalist, commentator and author Peter Hartcher.George reported that the program originated as a trauma recovery program for young refugees in an intensive english language centre.  These centres are where school-age children from overseas go to learn English. Catherine was a counsellor at one of these centres at Miller High School near Liverpool.George addressed the meeting as follows:“The Treehouse Theatre has two main objectives:**·        **To facilitate the recovery of young refugees from trauma suffered during their experiences in a war zone, during their escape and their journey to Australia. It works as a form of repeated exposure therapy which seems to be effective eg the nightmares and flashbacks stopped.**·        **To educate their peers and the public, especially the current generation of school students, about the reality of the refugee experience, and hence to contribute to building an inclusive and accepting society.****The first objective is addressed through our program of group counselling and repeated exposure therapy in rehearsals and performances. This was developed by our psychologist Catherine, in consultation with the Service for the Treatment and Rehabilitation of Torture and Trauma Survivors (STARTTS). The second objective is addressed by presenting public performances in which the young refugees present their own stories in major theatres.  These performances are carefully structured starting with funny stories, establishing a rapport with the audience, before they move onto their trauma stories that made them refugees. The audience reaction provides validation and acceptance for the refugee cast and the audience leave with both an intellectual and emotional appreciation of the refugee experience. Peer acceptance is an important part of the trauma recovery process - hence the performances are specifically targeted at school groups, although the stories are so powerful that they also appeal to adult audiences. In addition to building acceptance of refugees in schools, we are thus contributing to acceptance of refugees in the community more generally, especially in the longer term. Our immediate aim is to increase the number of schools sending students to see Treehouse performances. We currently present two productions each year - one at Casula Powerhouse near Liverpool in June (to coincide with Refugee Week) performed by students from Holroyd High School (five performances).  The one at the Seymour Centre in November in Chippendale, will be performed by students from Miller Technology High School (five performances). Since our first performance in 2010, we have had 400 young refugees go through the programs and our audiences have totalled over 40,000. A number of schools have taken a whole year 8 or 9 to see one of their performances every year. Before the pandemic, we had regular attendances of about 1,200 at Casula and about 2,500 at the Seymour Centre. Now our audiences are less than half the pre-pandemic figures. With only the current performances, we have the seating capacity to host audiences totalling 5,000 per annum. With extra performances, we could double this figure without any extra effort. Our longer term aim is to secure on-going funding to allow the program to continue, after the current key volunteers are no longer able to continue. This would be about $24,000 per annum to pay for a psychologist and a drama teacher to work on Sundays for the counselling sessions and rehearsals. The remainder of the work would be done by Treehouse volunteers.” Catherine spoke about wanting to step down from her volunteer position as the theatre’s psychiatrist and counsellor but as previously mentioned, they would need to obtain funding to pay for a replacement psychologist.  Patron Peter Hartcher was able to make contact with Prue Car, NSW Minister for Education who is interested in attending a future performance.  Next week they will be meeting with senior people from the Dept of Education to see what support they can obtain from them.  George suggested that the work of L4R is complementary with the Treehouse Theatre and we could each benefit from some carefully planned cooperation.  He asked L4R to assist by making representations at both state and federal ministerial levels.  He also suggested cross promotion by L4R via social media and our newsletter.****It was resolved by members at our meeting, that the Secretary write to the to three NSW Ministers who may be receptive to their cause.  Prue Car as the Education Minister, Ryan Park as the Health Minister and Stephen Kamper as the Minister for Multiculturalism.  Stephen Kamper has been very supportive of L4R.****L4R to also write to Immigration Minister Andrew Giles asking him for support as well as the Member for Macquarie Susan Templeman, who is a Special Envoy for the Arts.  Susan, who is a L4R member,  has also seen a Treehouse Theatre production.****Please support the good work being carried out by the Treehouse Theatre and attend one of its performances in November.****A flyer for a theatre  Description automatically generated**[**Buy Chippendale Tickets**](https://facebook.us7.list-manage.com/track/click?u=09c48b6cba9909c3558998ce0&id=c38b5b9f95&e=f705cf268c)**Nauru and refugees - update****Last month, we reported that at the Victorian Labor State Conference, Immigration Minister Andrew Giles, when addressing conference delegates, indicated that shortly there will be no refugees left on Nauru.We can now report that the last detainee on Nauru was brought to Australia, with some awaiting resettlement in the US, Canada and New Zealand.  Home Affairs officials noted that Nauru remains ready to receive and process any new unauthorized maritime arrivals, future-proofing Australia’s response to maritime people smuggling. The Kaldor Centre’s Madeline Gleeson noted that, a decade since ‘offshoring’ began intended as a temporary measure, it has become a core pillar of Australian asylum policy.  Home Affairs reaffirmed that people seeking asylum who arrive by boat will be returned or transferred to a regional processing country, with a budget of $350 million per year allocated to keep the Nauru Regional Processing Centre operational while empty.  It's scandalous!!Some 80 people seeking asylum remain in Papua New Guinea.Civil society groups called for their immediate transfer to Australia for urgent medical care and resettlement.The current statistics are that of the 82 men in Port Moresby, 52 are in the resettlement pathwayfor the USA, Canada and NZ.   A good number of them have married local women, established families and businesses and have decided to remain. However, 12 are unwell and are being treated in a private hospital in Port Moresby including for their mental issues. This is not a suitable hospital for treating refugees.****It was resolved that we make representation to the Home Affairs Minister Clare O’Neil about theunsuitability of the hospital.   The Secretary wrote to the Minister on the 9 July last, pointing out that the Port Moresby hospital does not have access to the wealth of experience and talent of specialised Australian medical services for refugees, which have developed over the last 20 years of Australia's detention policy and its side effects.We called on the Minister to relocate those 12 people to Australia where they can receive specialised medical services designed to address the trauma and mental illness arising out of detention, which is a specialised area acknowledged by 2010 Australian of the Year, Professor Patrick McGorry.**

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| **Refugees and asylum seekers unlawfully held in detention in Australia** |
| **Home Affairs documents obtained under Freedom of Information reveal that from 2018 to 2022, some 115 people including refugees, migrants and citizens were unlawfully held in immigration detention for periods of between a few days to more than six years, due to errors in administration and process in federal agencies.****Immigration lawyers have called for more investment in the department’s technology systems and an overhaul of migration laws to ensure no one slips through the cracks, as unlawful detention is both unethical and exposes the government to financial penalties.****There is also a call from some quarters for a Royal Commission into Immigration Detention.** |

**I look forward to seeing you at our online meeting next Wednesday.** |
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**Regards****Nizza SianoSecretary L4R NSWemail:***contact@labor4refugees.com*

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