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Our monthly meeting will be held next Wednesday 27 September 2023 at 6.30pm.**  **We invite you to join us to discuss the ongoing issues that still need to be addressed following the ALP National Conference. To receive the Zoom link, please** [**join Labor for Refugees NSW/ACT**](http://www.labor4refugees.com/membership/)**.**  **The Minutes of our last meeting follow**[*MinutesL4RNSW-ACT23Aug23*](https://mcusercontent.com/09c48b6cba9909c3558998ce0/files/59fd139a-0db9-c090-24d4-e5bf4f671059/23_8_23_L4R_NSW_ACT_MINUTES.pdf)    **ALP National Conference - what we won for refugees**  **We attended Labor's 49th National Conference in Brisbane on the 17, 18 and 19 August last.  Some of us flew up the day before and were able to meet up with the Immigration Minister Andrew Giles and his staff on the Wednesday.  We met him again on the following two days in the lead up to the debate on refugees which took place on Friday morning.  Our L4R proposed amendments were debated with the Minister by delegates from L4R NSW/ACT, Queensland and Victoria.  We did our best to negotiate the best deal for refugees and although the Minister made it clear that the L4R NSW/ACT demand for a Royal Commission into Immigration Detention was unacceptable, he agreed to hold a Parliamentary Inquiry into Immigration Detention.**    **We are pleased to note the following commitments in the 2023 National Platform, building on significant steps from previous Conferences.  The Platform commits to:**   * **give the highest priority to the humane, durable, and timely resettlement of refugees subject to third country resettlement agreements;** * **work across the region to support and resettle refugees using safe, orderly pathways;** * **give appropriate consideration to UNHCR refugee registrations to assist Indonesia and the UNHCR to work through the backlog;** * **work cooperatively with the international community to find durable solutions to the global refugee crisis and deploy our statecraft to advance the cause for peace and human security;** * **reintroduce the appropriate references to the Refugees Convention into the Migration Act 1958;** * **appoint a Special Envoy for Refugee and Asylum Seeker Issues with responsibilities for advancing Australia’s interests and ensuring Australia plays a global role in the resettlement of displaced people;** * **initiate a parliamentary inquiry into immigration detention;** * **progressively increase our humanitarian intake to 27,000 a year; and** * **progressively increase the complementary resettlement intake (which includes community sponsorship programs) to 10,000 places per year.**   **In addition, the Platform states that:**   * ***the assessment and review of protection claims will be underpinned by robust, efficient and transparent processes which that ensure fair and consistent outcomes, including access to review which allows for the consideration of additional material, and access to independent advice. The highest priority will be allocated to action the orderly and fair resolution of the backlog of cases subjected to the fast track assessment process*.**   **It also commits Labor to enshrining into law the ‘90-day rule’\* and other principles bearing on the humane treatment of people seeking asylum. (\*detaining people seeking asylum for health and security checks for no more than 90 days in normal circumstances, then granting them bridging visas with work and study rights while their claim is assessed).  Detention that is indefinite or otherwise arbitrary is not acceptable.**    **Permanent Residency  The Government has offered permanency to those on Temporary Protection Visas and Safe Haven Enterprise Visas. Some 3,000 of the 19,000 on these temporary visas have so far been given permanent residency. There are a further 12,000 refugees who arrived by boat (called by the Coalition the “legacy caseload”) whose fate remains uncertain after many years. The 2023 National Platform states that those on bridging visas should have work and study rights while they wait for the outcome of their application for asylum.  As refugees move into the Australian community, they face challenges such as access to housing, employment, physical and mental health services, English language support, and transport. Some State governments have health and welfare support systems in place, but the Federal Government needs to restore the subsistence income support abolished by the Coalition Government.**    **In order to deal with the queue of refugees applying for permanancy, we suggested to the Minister when we met with him at the Conference, that he could use the powers under the Public Service Act to hire additional staff (instead of permanent public servants), to process the people on temporary visas to clear the backlog.   We were told that they took 250 people from Indonesia last year and plan to take another 250 people this year. They would need to take more if they want to clear the backlog. The Special Envoy, (a position reinstated in the Platform at the conference), would need to work hard to increase those numbers. This would be of benefit to the government if it prevented people from wanting to get on boats.**    **Despite progress, there is still much to be done.   Over the past two decades respect for international law and convention has been eroded in Australia. The Government needs to:**   * **Significantly increase funding to support the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees to improve orderly regional processing and resettlement in the region.** * **Appoint a children’s advocate independent of the Department of Home Affairs, legislate to impose mandatory reporting of child abuse in detention, and recognise the role of state child protection authorities.**   **Beyond this, Labor for Refugees NSW/ACT will continue to advocate for further policy reforms to:**   * **Ensure no children are kept in detention ever again. Rather, they will be placed into community-run reception centres together with their families.** * **Increase Australia’s humanitarian intake progressively to 50,000 per year.** * **Ensure the closing of off-shore processing centres Nauru and PNG and the transfer of all detainees to Australia for on-shore processing. This measure will provide savings of up to $1 billion per year to be spent on other priorities.** * **Ensure the provision of legal aid for people seeking asylum.** * **Ensure that the provisions of the UN Refugee Convention and UN human rights instruments, to which Australia is a signatory, are included in Australian asylum seeker and refugee domestic law and policy.** * **Achieve the cooperation required to reach sustainable regional processing arrangements and reject policies which turn away asylum-seeker boats.** * **Maintain levels of foreign aid sufficient to address the root causes, improve conditions and the rule of law in the places from which people are escaping.** * **Where short periods of detention are unavoidable, Labor for Refugees will work to ensure the mandatory reporting of abuse in detention and the establishment of an independent commission to inform the public on the facts on refugees and people seeking asylum.**   A group of people standing in front of a white wall  Description automatically generated  **Our Labor for Refugees stall at the National Conference in Brisbane.**  **Thanks to L4R Qld, we held a very successful Fringe Event and a well organised stall where we promoted the work of Labor for Refugees nationally.  I look forward to seeing you at our online meeting next Wednesday.**   |  |  |  | | --- | --- | --- | | |  | | --- | |  | |  | | |  |   **Regards**  **Nizza Siano Secretary L4R NSW email:**[*contact@labor4refugees.com*](mailto:contact@labor4refugees.com)   |  | | --- | |  | |  | |  | |  | |  | |  | |  | |  | |  | | | |
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