

2016: What a year.

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2016 has been an epic year in so many ways. Globally, we've seen seismic shifts in the political landscape. In Australia, we have witnessed a double dissolution election, historic wins in the world of sport and possibly the beginning of the end of offshore detention. And here at the Refugee Council of Australia (RCOA), we have been pretty busy too. Here is a brief snapshot of what we've been up to from the past 12 months, **all made possible because of your support.**



Citizenship win!

We supported two people from refugee background to take the Immigration Minister to court over citizenship delays - and win!

This will affect over 10,000 people across Australia. [Read more.](#)



Refugee Week

This year, we celebrated our biggest ever Refugee Week with over 350 events across Australia, including festivals, film screenings, flash mobs and more.

[Read more.](#)



#EducationForAll

Together with people of refugee background and other organisations, we have successfully campaigned for better access to education for people seeking asylum and refugees.

[Read more.](#)

Q&A: Shukufa Tahiri, RCOA Policy Assistant



How long have you been working at RCOA?

Since March 2016.

And how has your first year been?

It's been terrific. I feel very fortunate to have been offered this opportunity. There is a lot of room for learning and growth, it has been very fulfilling. The staff here are really fantastic, particularly my supervisor Joyce and my mentor Tim, who have been such a great support. I also love being part of a very bright policy team.

What has been your highlight of 2016?

Definitely working with the Refugee Communities Advocacy Network (RCAN). It has always been the vision of RCOA that there should be an independent organisation of people from refugee backgrounds advocating on the issues that affect themselves and their communities. In May, RCAN held a conference where community members expressed a very strong willingness to form an independent network to have a voice, contribute to policy, carry out joint advocacy, share knowledge and build capacity. This is new and very much needed. Another highlight was speaking at the Festival of Dangerous Ideas, which gave me a lot of opportunity to reflect on the work that I do. I also enjoyed asking a question live on ABC's Q and A, which sparked debate amongst the panel.

What else do you do when you're not at work?

I volunteer, helping people seeking asylum, mostly from the Hazara community because I speak the language. I assist them in filling out forms and understanding their rights. I am also studying a Bachelor of Law and Economics.

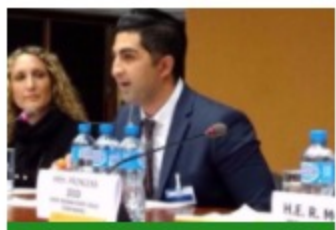
What has 2017 got in store for you?

On a personal and professional level, I hope to grow and develop in different ways. I'm also really looking forward to finally wrapping up my undergrad degree!

I'm excited about officially launching RCAN in February but also just about learning more, whatever that may be.

If you could have one wish for refugee policy in 2017, what would it be?

I hope that in 2017 refugees and people seeking asylum are treated as humans, with more compassion. I'd love to see our politicians showing some strong political leadership on these issues in 2017.



International Advocacy

[In June](#), together with our partners, we supported four people from refugee backgrounds to take their message to the UN in Geneva. With the Asia Pacific Refugee Rights Network (APRRN), we also continued to work towards [regional solutions](#) for displaced people in the region.



Face to Face

This year, we visited 89 schools in NSW and Victoria with people from refugee backgrounds, who talked with students about their experiences as part of the Face to Face programme. Next year, we will be working with the Hume Local Government Area to expand the project. [Read more.](#)



Annual Consultations

We travelled the length and breadth of Australia to listen to and speak with refugee community members and service providers about [their views](#) on Australian refugee policy in 65 consultations. We also conducted [specific consultations](#) with young people from refugee backgrounds.

We also...

- Made 18 formal submissions to Government;
- Published numerous reports and policy briefs;
- Conducted a national Refugee Welcome Zone consultation;
- Facilitated over 30 teleconferences on policy issues;
- Advocated directly to federal, state and local politicians;
- Launched Australia's first ever Refugee Film Festival; and
- Much, much more. For a full wrap up, please see our [Annual Report](#).



2017 Exciting times ahead...

- Inaugural Refugee Alternatives Conference
- Launch of Refugee Communities Advocacy Network as independent national body
- Refugee Film Festival
- Refugee Week
- And so much more- watch this space!



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