



Refugee Council
of Australia

A GUIDE FOR BOARD CANDIDATES

2020

CONTENTS

1. INTRODUCTION	2
2. OUR ORGANISATION	2
2.1 Vision, purpose and aims of RCOA	
2.2 Organisational status and funding	
2.3 Involvement of members and refugee communities	
2.4 RCOA offices and staff	
2.5 Australian Refugee Foundation	
3. THE RCOA BOARD	4
3.1 The role of the Board	
3.2 Board Membership	
3.3 Committees of the RCOA Board	
3.4 Annual meeting schedule	
4. ROLES, RESPONSIBILITIES AND EXPECTATIONS OF BOARD MEMBERS	5
4.1 Legal obligations of non-profit boards	
4.2 Collective responsibility of Board members	
4.3 Individual responsibility of Board members	
4.4 Responsibilities of office bearers	
(a) The President	
(b) The Vice President	
(c) The Chairperson	
(d) The Secretary	
(e) The Treasurer	
(f) Chairpersons of Subcommittees	
5. CODE OF CONDUCT FOR ALL MEMBERS OF THE RCOA BOARD	8
5.1 Commitments required of Board members	
5.2 Accountability and the Board	
5.3 Conflict of interest	
APPENDICES	
1. RCOA Constitution	10
2. Strategic Plan 2016-2021	21

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1. INTRODUCTION

This manual is intended to serve as a guide for candidates for Board of the Refugee Council of Australia. It is an edited version of a guide provided to new Board members.

2. OUR ORGANISATION

2.1 Vision, purpose and aims of RCOA

Formed in 1981, the Refugee Council of Australia (RCOA) is the national umbrella body for refugees and asylum seekers and the organisations and individuals who work with them. RCOA does not provide direct services to refugees and asylum seekers but represents organisations which do. Its purpose is to work with its members (both organisational and individual) in promoting the development of humane, lawful and constructive policies towards refugees and asylum seekers by Australian and other governments and their communities.

The organisation's vision and purpose, as expressed in its Strategic Plan 2016-2021 are:

Vision: For the voices of refugees to be heard, the rights of refugees to be respected, the humanity of refugees valued and the contribution of refugees celebrated.

Purpose: To work with its members in promoting the development of humane, lawful and constructive policies towards refugees and asylum seekers by Australian and other governments and their communities.

In order to achieve this purpose, the Council pursues the following aims:

- (a) To act as a unifying organisation and to represent its members.
- (b) To promote the empowerment of refugee communities and individuals in Australia and internationally and support the capacity building of Australia's refugee sector.
- (c) To monitor, research and present information on issues relating to the needs and circumstances of refugees and asylum seekers.
- (d) To assist governments and inter-governmental organisations to formulate policy and improve support and services for refugees and asylum seekers.
- (e) To increase public awareness and media sensitivity towards refugees and asylum seekers.

The RCOA Strategic Plan 2016-2021 (see appendix 2) contains detailed information about the context within which the Council works, its vision, goals and objectives.

2.2 Organisational status and funding

A non-profit organisation with tax-deductible charity status, RCOA is registered as an association in the Australian Capital Territory. RCOA does not receive regular funding from any source but relies largely on public donations and membership fees to continue its work. In late 2019, the Council had around 170 organisational and 270 individual members and in 2018-19 had received \$875,000 in public donations. Other funding includes sponsorship contributions for Refugee Week from state government agencies and NGOs, some occasional grants or contributions from state government bodies or philanthropic organisations and financial contributions for RCOA's annual conference and community education programs. A limited amount of core funding from the Federal Government (\$140,000 p.a.) was removed by the then Immigration Minister in 2014 but this was more than replaced by the increase in donations which followed the Minister's decision.

2.3 Involvement of members and refugee communities

The organisation's policy and representation work is informed by a constant process of consultation with members, refugee communities and supporters. Each year, RCOA conducts national consultations to seek views on issues of concern to people of refugee background and the organisations that support them and diaspora in Australia. The information shared contributes to the

policy work of the Council including a submission to the Australian Government in planning the next year's Refugee and Humanitarian Program. This consultation process is supplemented by year-round involvement in interagency networks, and constant contact (through individual meetings, phone contact and email) with members, communities and supporters.

RCOA convenes three teleconference-based networks of members to engage members in the organisation's three key areas of policy:

- The Asylum Policy Network, which holds two teleconferences each month to discuss issues relating to Australian policy affecting asylum seekers, including legal issues, detention and support for community-based asylum seekers.
- The Refugee Settlement Policy Network, which takes the form of a quarterly teleconference forum on a refugee settlement issue of interest to members. Since 2009, this network has been convened jointly with the Settlement Council of Australia.
- The International Policy Network, which coordinates the advocacy efforts of Australian NGOs interested in participating in international forums including key UNHCR meetings in Geneva (Annual NGO Consultations, Annual Tripartite Consultations on Resettlement and Executive Committee meeting).

Armed with information from these consultation processes and other research, RCOA represents Australians concerned with refugee issues at key national and international forums, including: national and state advisory committees; government dialogues on migration and human rights issues; key international meetings of UNHCR; and regular meetings with politicians, government officials and representatives of UN and international agencies.

Since 2007, RCOA has been very active in supporting refugee-led advocacy. Its efforts to promote opportunities for refugee community representatives from Australia to advocate at the international level have played a significant role in improving refugee representation at UNHCR's international meetings with NGOs. In June 2018, RCOA was one of two NGOs to support the first ever Global Summit of Refugees, an event which led to the formation seven months later of the Global Refugee-led Network. In October 2018, RCOA supported the first Asia Pacific Summit of Refugees which has since led to the development of the Asia Pacific Network of Refugees as a strong regional network affiliated with the Global Refugee-led Network. RCOA has also supported the development of refugee-led advocacy in Australia and has created a strong policy platform for people with lived experience of forced displacement through the Refugee Alternatives conference, held annually since 2017. This led in 2020 to the formation of the National Refugee-led Advisory and Advocacy Group.

2.4 RCOA offices and staff

RCOA has two offices – in Sydney and Melbourne. The staff team is headed by the CEO and includes staff with responsibility for research, policy development, communications, campaigns and advocacy, community education, membership support and administration. A list of staff members is on the RCOA website.

2.5 Australian Refugee Foundation

The Australian Refugee Foundation (ARF) was established in 1997 expressly to support the work of RCOA recognising that, if the Council is to continue as an independent voice for refugees, it must have independent sources of funding.

It is the aim of the Foundation to secure funds and manage them so as to maximise the long term benefits to RCOA. The Foundation depends on the generosity of individuals and organisations. The Foundation provides financial support to the Council. In 2006, the ARF purchased office space in Sydney for use by RCOA. Between July 2011 and June 2019, the ARF provided \$875,000 in funding to RCOA.

The ARF is managed by a Committee of Trustees appointed by the Board. The President of the Board is the Chair of the Committee of the ARF and serves as the Convenor of Trustees. The Board

Executive appoints two members of the Board of the Council (including the Treasurer) and three people who are not on the Board of the Council to serve as ARF Trustees. Trustees meet at least every six months and the quorum for a meeting of Trustees is four.

The ARF has two patrons: Professor Marie Bashir AC CVO, the former Governor of NSW (2001-14) who made a significant contribution to refugee health in her earlier career as a doctor, psychiatrist and Clinical Professor of Psychiatry at the University of Sydney; and Bishop Vincent Long Van Nguyen OFM Conv, the Catholic Bishop of Parramatta, a former refugee from Vietnam who was resettled to Australia in 1980.

3. THE RCOA BOARD

3.1 The role of the Board

The Board is responsible to members of the Council for guiding the policy work of the Council and for the governance of the organisation. The Board's role includes:

- providing a focussed and informed voice on matters of refugee policy in Australia and internationally;
- leadership and strategic direction in relation to policy and operations;
- oversight and monitoring of the policies and operations of the Council;
- adherence to the aims of the Council and its policies as decided from time to time; and
- decisions on governance and finance matters in the best interests of the Council.

In effect, the Board of RCOA has two roles:

- to act as a national council on matters of refugee policy, determining the focus of the organisation's national and international refugee policy work; and
- to decide on governance and finance matters related to the running of the RCOA secretariat.

The Board sees its national role in refugee policy as its key role – and, as a result, discussions on matters of refugee policy are the main focus of Board meetings. Policy discussions between Board meetings are pursued as necessary through meetings of the Policy Committee. Given the complexity of the refugee policy matters being considered, a larger Board of up to 16 members is necessary to provide expert input on the breadth of issues under discussion.

While the full Board decides on critical governance and finance issues, more minor administrative matters are delegated to the Governance, Finance and Risk Management Committee or the CEO. The CEO and the Governance, Finance and Risk Management Committee report to each Board meeting on matters decided and seek approval for any decisions which reasonably require the full Board's agreement.

The Board can also form working groups or sub-committees, as necessary, to assist it in its work.

3.2 Board Membership

RCOA is governed by a Board either elected by members or co-opted for their expertise. The Board consists of:

- five office bearers – President, Vice-President, Secretary, Treasurer and Chair;
- six elected representatives of the members (five representatives of organisational members and one representative of individual members);
- up to six (but generally one to four) co-opted board members, selected by the Board to maintain more balanced representation of relevant sectors of the organisation's membership; and
- possibly the Immediate Past President, who may also be appointed to the Board as part of the co-option process.

A Chairperson is chosen from among the members of the Board, to chair board meetings. Board members, both elected and co-opted, hold office for a period of two years, with the term of office expiring at the Annual General Meeting two years after election.

Each year, five of the 10 elected Board positions fall vacant. In one year, elections are held for the positions of President, Secretary and three of the Organisational Member representatives. In the following year, members elect the Vice President, the Treasurer, two Organisational Member representatives and the Individual Member representative.

Financial members of RCOA (included nominees of Organisational Members) are eligible to stand for election. Board members, once elected, serve in a personal capacity, rather than as the holder of a particular office within a member organisation. Where a board member has been elected as an organisational member representative but ceases to represent that organisation, the board position becomes vacant (see RCOA constitution, 15.5). The Board then will decide how this position is filled for the remainder of the two-year term.

The Constitution contains detailed information about membership of the Board and is attached in Appendix 1.

3.3 Committees of the RCOA Board

Committees are formed by the Board, according to current needs. Committees report and make recommendations to the Board relating to their area of responsibility for endorsement by the Board. Committees appoint a chairperson from within their membership. As at October 2019, there is one standing committee, the Governance, Finance and Risk Management Committee.

Governance, Finance and Risk Management Committee

The Committee is comprised of five to seven members – the four elected members of the Executive (President, Vice-President, Secretary and Treasurer) and one to three other Board members. The Board could choose to co-opt non-members of the Board on to this committee to broaden its range of skills.

The Governance, Finance and Risk Management Committee meets at least four times a year, separately from the Board meetings. Meetings deal with all issues relating to staffing, finance, membership, administration, risk management and governance. A report summarising matters discussed and proposing recommendations which require the support of the full Board is presented by the Committee to each meeting of the Board.

3.4 Annual meeting schedule

The RCOA Board generally holds four face-to-face meetings each year. Following each AGM, the Board decides on the following year's meeting schedule and venues. Typically, the meetings are held in February, May, August and November and most often in Sydney, although the meetings can be moved to other cities as required. The November meeting usually coincides with the AGM. Occasionally, shorter additional Board meetings can be held by teleconference for specific purposes, although this has not happened in recent years. The Governance and Finance Committee meets at least four times per year by teleconference for about 1 to 1½ hours. In 2020, however, all Board and committee meetings have been held via Zoom because of COVID-19 travel restrictions.

4. ROLES, RESPONSIBILITIES AND EXPECTATIONS OF BOARD MEMBERS

Day-to-day operational management of RCOA is the responsibility of the CEO. While the CEO proposes policies and strategic management of the Council, these require Board approval.

The following roles and responsibilities and expectations of Board members include collective responsibilities of the Board, individual responsibilities of Board members and responsibilities of

individual office bearers. The Governance and Finance Committee is responsible for review of these roles and will from time to time recommend changes about the roles and other governance processes for presentation to the Board for endorsement and adoption.

4.1 Legal obligations of non-profit boards

While RCOA is incorporated under the ACT Associations Incorporation Act 1991, courts have found that the legal obligations which apply to companies under the Corporations Act also apply to directors of non-profit organisations.¹ Under the Corporations Act, all board members are bound to:

- to act with due care and diligence;
- to act in good faith and for a proper purpose;
- to avoid improper use of position and information;
- to disclose conflicts of interest; and
- to not trade while insolvent or make transactions that cause the company to become insolvent.

In January 2012, a new national regime of Work Health and Safety (WHS) legislation, regulations and codes of practice came into force. Under these arrangements, Board members and others who participate in management decisions hold responsibilities for maintaining organisational WHS policies. To comply with the new WHS requirements, RCOA revised its WHS policy, adopting it in May 2012.

4.2 Collective responsibility of Board members

Office bearers, elected and co-opted Board members:

- determine that the aims and objectives of RCOA are implemented and from time to time reviewed;
- ensure proper accountability to RCOA's members through regular reports, consultation and the production of audited annual accounts;
- formally appoint the Chief Executive Officer;
- ensure effective organisational strategy and planning through engagement with staff and regular strategic planning sessions with the adoption of a strategic planning document that will guide the activities of the organisation;
- ensure that good staff management strategies are in place and that policy relating to staff is current and appropriate;
- ensure the availability of adequate resources to carry out the aims and objectives of RCOA;
- manage resources effectively by protecting assets and with oversight management of the finances of RCOA including the adoption of annual budgets and monitoring their implementation;
- formulate, monitor and strengthen services to members and programs of research and advocacy in conjunction with staff through the production and implementation of effective and current policies and position statements;
- ensure legal and ethical integrity through the implementation of effective management processes, procedures and measures; and
- assist in the recruitment and orientation of new Board members and assess Board performance, and any other function as decided from time to time.

4.3 Individual responsibility of Board members

Board members will:

- upon election or co-option, confirm in writing that they have received the introductory letter that will be sent to them and that they have read RCOA's core documents;
- attend Board and committee meetings regularly, read background documentation prior to the meeting and participate in an informed manner;

¹ See *Commonwealth Bank v Friedrich & Ors* (1991)

- observe confidentiality and solidarity of Board membership;
- enhance the public image and standing of RCOA by representing the organisation in a positive manner to the public and the media and other players in the field; and
- support the CEO and other staff by providing feedback on issues when requested and in as timely manner as possible.

Board members are encouraged, where possible, to participate in any functions or consultations organised by RCOA in the city where the Board member is based. In addition, Board members are encouraged to participate, where possible, in the RCOA member policy network most relevant to their area of expertise (i.e. the Asylum Policy Network, the Refugee Settlement Policy Network or the International Policy Network).

4.4 Responsibility of office bearers

In addition to their responsibilities as Board members, specific responsibilities of individual office bearers are as follows:

(a) The President

- Provides overall leadership to the Board and membership in close co-operation with the Chief Executive Officer, setting high standards of participation and engagement by practical example.
- Maintains an open door policy and is receptive to the concerns of both Board members and staff, taking appropriate action when necessary.
- Maintains regular contact with the CEO, liaising closely with him or her and ensuring adequate ongoing practical and moral support.
- Acts as the Convenor of the Board of Trustees of the Australian Refugee Foundation.
- Represents RCOA at public functions and with the government and the media when appropriate.
- In conjunction with the CEO and the Chairperson, constructs the agenda for regular Board and Executive meetings and checks the draft minutes for accuracy prior to circulation.
- Produces a written report for inclusion in the Annual Report, chairs the Annual General Meeting and produces a report for regular Board meetings.
- Recruits new members to the Board who have appropriate skills and expertise and who may enhance the performance of the Board.
- Ensures the annual performance appraisal of the CEO and regular performance evaluations of the Board are undertaken.
- Develops a succession plan.

(b) The Vice President

- Provides support for the President.
- Deputises for the President when the incumbent is absent or unavailable.
- In conjunction with other Executive Members, provides leadership through active participation and engagement with Board members and staff.
- Represents RCOA publicly when the need arises.

(c) The Chairperson

- In conjunction with the President and other office bearers, provides leadership through high standards of participation and engagement with both other Board members and staff.
- In conjunction with the CEO and President, constructs the agenda for regular meetings of the Board, and the Annual General Meeting.
- Chairs Board meetings in a manner that facilitates maximum Board member and staff participation and which promotes the production of good policy analysis and formulation as well as appropriate monitoring of the performance of the organisation.
- In conjunction with the CEO and President, checks draft minutes for accuracy.
- Provides appropriate support to the CEO and other staff and is responsive to requests for practical assistance and or moral support.

- Represents RCOA publicly when the need arises.

(d) The Secretary

The Secretary of the Council ensures that minutes of the resolutions and proceedings of each general meeting and each Board meeting are recorded together with a record of the names of persons present, and performs other duties as determined by the Board.

(e) The Treasurer

In line with the responsibilities outlined in the RCOA constitution, the Treasurer:

- Oversees the collection and receipt of all monies due to RCOA and the payment of monies authorised by the Council.
- Ensures that correct accounts and books showing the financial affairs of the Council are kept and that these show full details of all receipts and expenditure connected with the activities of the Council.
- Submits to each meeting of the Board, a statement on the financial affairs of the Council.
- Oversees the preparation of an income and expenditure statement and balance sheet for each financial year.
- Ensures that RCOA's financial records are independently audited at least once each financial year.
- Ensures that the accounting records and books of the Council be available for inspection by members.

In addition, the Treasurer

- In conjunction with the President and other Executive Members, provides leadership through high standards of participation and engagement with both other Board members and staff.
- Provides appropriate advice to the Board with regard to Board fiduciary duties and responsibilities.
- While an office bearer of RCOA, serves as a Trustee of the Australian Refugee Foundation.
- Is a member on the Governance and Finance Committee.
- Represents RCOA publicly when the need arises.

(f) Chairpersons of Committees

- Convene committee meetings at regular intervals, according to the schedule and taking into account the availability and convenience of the members.
- Work closely with the CEO or other appropriate staff members to prepare the agenda and any documents for the committee meetings.
- Ensure that accurate minutes of the meetings are produced and distributed.
- Present a report on the activities of the committee to the regular meetings of the Board that incorporates recommendations relating to policy, Council positions or to required action to be taken by RCOA.
- Ensure that the most up to date information relating to the work of their committee such as financial statements, relevant Government documents or legislation, latest statistics on relevant matters, political statements affecting refugees and asylum seekers, be available for presentation and discussion at committee meetings.
- Make every effort to ensure that the committee members actively participate in all meetings.
- Respond to requests for advice or assistance from the CEO and staff and, if unavailable to respond, delegate the task to another member of the committee.
- Encourage other members of the committee to respond in a timely fashion to requests from staff for advice or assistance.

5 CODE OF CONDUCT FOR ALL MEMBERS OF THE RCOA BOARD

5.1 Commitments required of Board members

Members of the Board agree to:

- Fully commit to the aims and the objectives of the RCOA.

- Be actively involved in the activities of the Board, sharing their expertise, knowledge and experience and engaging with and assisting the CEO when invited.
- Abide by democratically arrived at resolutions of the Board.
- Declare any possible or perceived conflicts of interest [see below] and withdraw from subsequent discussion and decision making relating to them.
- Identify with and represent the RCOA at appropriate meetings and functions in conjunction with the CEO and/or the President.
- Refrain from making public or private statements that may in any way compromise the good name and integrity of the RCOA.

5.2 Accountability and the Board

The Board is ultimately responsible and may be liable for the actions taken or not taken by the Council. The Board should ensure that the Council has proper systems and procedures in place which:

- safeguard the Council;
- ensure its operations comply with all legal and professional requirements;
- ensure regular monitoring and reporting of activities and finances;
- evaluate activities and performance against targets;
- guarantee reliable internal accountability systems amongst staff members, Board members, between staff and the Board, between the Board and Council members and between volunteers.

5.3 Conflict of interest

A conflict of interest is where a person stands to gain or lose, personally or financially through situations relating to any aspect of the operations of the Council. A conflict of interest can arise when a Board member for example has employment or other involvements or interest that may make it difficult for them to always act in the best interests of the Council.

The conflict of interest may lead to the following consequences:

- Financial benefit or loss;
- Political benefit or loss;
- Personal benefit or loss.

It is important to acknowledge that Board members will experience conflicts of interest from time to time but that this does not have to cause a problem if the situation is managed well. Where there is a known or perceived conflict of interest the Board member should complete a statement outlining what the conflict is; how it may arise and the procedure that will be applied before or soon after commencing their term of office or as soon as possible after the conflict is identified. This will help to protect the member and the Council.

APPENDIX 1

CONSTITUTION AND RULES OF THE REFUGEE COUNCIL OF AUSTRALIA INCORPORATED

(Amended 16 November 2015)

The Council is incorporated in the Australian Capital Territory under the Associations Incorporation Act 1991. The rules in this Constitution are intended to provide for the matters raised in Schedule 1 of the Associations Incorporation Act (ACT) 1991. In the event of any inconsistency between this Constitution and the Model Rules in the Regulations to the Associations Incorporation Act (ACT) 1991, the provisions of this Constitution prevail.

1. NAME

The name shall be the Refugee Council of Australia Incorporated (in these rules called the **Council**).

2. PURPOSE AND AIMS

The purpose of the Refugee Council of Australia is to work with its members in promoting the development of humane, lawful and constructive policies towards refugees and asylum seekers by Australian and other governments and their communities.

In order to achieve this purpose, the Council pursues the following aims:

- (a) To act as a unifying organisation and to represent its members.
- (b) To promote the empowerment of refugee communities and individuals in Australia and internationally and support the capacity building of the refugee sector in and beyond Australia.
- (c) To monitor, research and present information on issues relating to the needs and circumstances of refugees and asylum seekers.
- (d) To assist governments and inter-governmental organisations to formulate policy and improve support and services for refugees and asylum seekers.
- (e) To increase public awareness of, and media sensitivity towards, refugees and asylum seekers.

3. DEFINITIONS

3.1 In these rules, unless the contrary intention appears:

Council means the Refugee Council of Australia;

Board means the Board of Directors of the Refugee Council of Australia;

Financial Year means the year ending 30 June;

General Meeting means either the Annual General Meeting of the Council or a special General Meeting convened in accordance with Article 9;

Member means a member of the Council;

Officers means these people elected as Office Bearers of the Council;

Ordinary Member of the Board means a member of the Board who is not an officer of the Council under Article 12;

The Act means the Associations Incorporation Act (ACT) 1991;

Refugee for the purpose of these rules, means a refugee or asylum seeker, irrespective of whether recognised as a Convention Refugee in Australia or elsewhere.

- 3.2 In these Rules, a reference to the Secretary of the Council refers to;
- (a) when a person holds office under these Rules as Secretary of the Council – to that person; and
 - (b) in any other case, to the Public Officer of the Council.
- 3.3 Words or expressions contained in these rules shall be interpreted in accordance with the provisions of the Interpretation of Legislation Act 1984 and the Act as in force from time to time.

4. MEMBERSHIP OF THE COUNCIL

- 4.1 There shall be two classes of members:
- (a) Organisational Members;
 - (b) Individual Members.
- 4.2 Organisations and individuals wishing to become members of the Council shall apply for membership by completing a membership application form and supplying the information set out therein.
- 4.3 The Board shall determine whether or not to accept an application for membership. If there is a dispute about membership, the matter shall be referred to a general meeting.
- 4.4 Members shall pay such fees as are determined by the Council in general meeting.
- 4.5 The Secretary shall, upon acceptance by the Board and payment of the required fees by an applicant, enter the applicant's name in the register of members and that organisation or person thereby becomes a member of the Council.
- 4.6 Membership shall cease upon resignation, expulsion or failure to pay outstanding membership fees without cause within six months of the due date.
- 4.7 Membership fees shall fall due on the first day of each financial year.

5. RIGHTS OF MEMBERS

- 5.1 All Members of the Council have the right to propose resolutions presented to a general meeting and Organisational members have the right to vote.
- 5.2 All Organisational and Individual Members have the right to nominate and vote for members of the Board assigned to represent the particular membership class to which they belong.
- 5.3 All Organisational and Individual Members have the right to speak to motions presented at General Meetings.

6. REGISTER OF MEMBERS

- 6.1 The Secretary shall keep and maintain a register of members in which shall be entered the full name, contact address/es and date of entry of the name of each member and the register shall be available for inspection by any member at the address of the Council.

7. RESIGNATION AND EXPULSION OF MEMBER

- 7.1 A financial member of the Council may resign from the Council by giving notice in writing to the Secretary.

- 7.2 Upon receipt of a notice given under sub-clause 7.1, the Secretary shall make in the register of members an entry recording the date on which the member by whom the notice was given, ceased to be a member.
- 7.3 Subject to these rules, the Board may by resolution:
- (a) expel a member from the Council;
 - (b) suspend a member from the membership of the Council for a specified period if the Board is of the opinion that the member:
 - (i) has refused or neglected to comply with these rules; or
 - (ii) has been guilty of conduct unbecoming a member or prejudicial to the interests of the Council.
- 7.4 A resolution of the Board under sub-clause 7.3:
- (a) does not take effect unless the Board, at a meeting held not earlier than 14 and not later than 28 days after the service on the member of a notice under sub-clause 7.3 confirms the resolution in accordance with this clause; and
 - (b) where the member exercises a right of appeal to the Council under this clause, the resolution does not take effect unless the Council confirms the resolution in accordance with this clause.
- 7.5 Where the Board passes a resolution under sub-clause 7.3, the Secretary shall, as soon as practicable, cause to be served on the member a notice in writing:
- (a) setting out the resolution of the Board and the full grounds on which it is based;
 - (b) stating that the member may address the Board at a meeting to be held not earlier than 14 and not later than 28 days after service of the notice;
 - (c) stating the date, place and time of that meeting;
 - (d) informing the member that the member shall do one or more of the following:
 - (i) attend that meeting;
 - (ii) give to the Board before the date of that meeting a written statement seeking the revocation of the resolution;
 - (iii) not later than 2 working days before the date of the meeting, lodge with the
 - (iv) Secretary a notice to the effect that the member wishes to appeal to the Council in a general meeting against the resolution.
- 7.6 At a meeting of the Board held in accordance with sub-clause 7.4, the Board:
- (a) shall give to the member an opportunity to be heard;
 - (b) shall give due consideration to any written statement submitted by the member; and
 - (c) shall by resolution determine whether to confirm or to revoke the resolution.
- 7.7 Where the Secretary receives a notice under sub-clause 7.5, the Secretary shall notify the Board and the Board shall convene a general meeting of the Council to be held within 28 days after the date on which the Secretary received the notice.
- 7.8 At a general meeting of the Council convened under sub-clause 7.7:
- (a) no business other than the question of the appeal shall be transacted;
 - (b) the Board shall place before the meeting details of the grounds for the resolution and the reasons for the passing of the resolution;
 - (c) the member shall be given an opportunity to be heard; and
 - (d) the members present shall vote by secret ballot on the question whether the resolution should be confirmed or revoked.
- 7.9 If at the general meeting convened under sub-clause 7.7:

- (a) two-thirds of the members vote in person or by proxy in favour of the confirmation of the resolution, the resolution is confirmed; and
- (b) in any other case, the resolution is revoked.

8. ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

- 8.1 The Council shall in each calendar year convene an Annual General Meeting of its members.
- 8.2 The Annual General Meeting shall be held on such day as the Board determines so long as this date is within five months of the end of the financial year.
- 8.3 Information about the time and place of the Annual General Meeting shall be sent to members in writing no less than 21 days prior to the meeting.
- 8.4 The Annual General Meeting shall be specified as such in the notice convening it.
- 8.5 The ordinary business of the Annual General Meeting shall be:
 - (a) to confirm the minutes of the preceding Annual General Meeting and of any general meeting held since that meeting;
 - (b) to present the Annual Report and audited financial statements for the preceding financial year; and
 - (c) to elect the Office Bearers and Ordinary Members of the Board as outlined in clause 15.
- 8.6 The following matters may also be included in the business of the Annual General Meeting:
 - (a) discussion of reports presented;
 - (b) consideration of any matter within the objects of, or relating to the affairs of the Council which are considered appropriate to raise at the meeting; and
 - (c) consideration of amendments to the Constitution.
- 8.7 The Annual General Meeting shall be in addition to any other general meetings that may be held in the same year.

9. SPECIAL GENERAL MEETING

- 9.1 All general meetings other than the Annual General Meeting shall be called Special General Meetings.
- 9.2 The Board may, whenever it thinks fit, convene a Special General Meeting or the Council.
- 9.3 The Board shall, on the requisition in writing of members representing not less than 5% of membership, convene a Special General Meeting of the Council.
- 9.4 The requisition for a Special General Meeting as outlined in sub-clause 9.3 shall state the objects of the meeting and shall be signed by the members making the requisition and be sent to the address of the Secretary and may consist of several documents in a like form, each signed by one or more of the members making the requisition.
- 9.5 The Secretary of the Council shall, at least 21 days before the date fixed for holding a general meeting of the Council, notify in writing each member of the Council of the place, date and time of the meeting and the nature of the business to be transacted at the meeting.
- 9.6 A member desiring to bring any business before a meeting, shall give notice of that business in writing to the Secretary, who shall include that business in the notice calling the next general meeting after the receipt of the notice.

10. PROCEEDINGS AT MEETINGS

- 10.1 No item of business shall be transacted at a general meeting unless a quorum of members entitled under these rules to vote is present during the time when the meeting is considering that item.
- 10.2 At a general meeting a quorum shall constitute 20 persons entitled to vote.
- 10.3 If within three quarters of an hour after the appointed time for the commencement of a general meeting, a quorum is not present, the meeting shall be adjourned, and the President shall call another general meeting within two months where no fixed quorum shall be necessary and all business transacted and decisions taken there shall be considered valid.
- 10.4 The President shall preside at each general meeting of the Council or may delegate this role to the Chairperson or the Vice President. In the President's absence, either the Chairperson or Vice President shall preside or, in the absence of either, those present shall elect a person to chair the meeting.
- 10.5 The presiding officer of a general meeting at which a quorum is present may, with the consent of the meeting, adjourn the meeting from time to time and place to place, but no business shall be transacted at an adjourned meeting other than the business left unfinished at the meeting at which the adjournment took place.
- 10.6 A question arising at a general meeting of the Council shall be determined on a show of hands and unless a secret ballot is demanded, a declaration by the presiding officer that a resolution has, on a show of hands, been carried or lost, and an entry to that effect in the Minute Book of the Council is evidence of the fact, without proof of a number or proportion of the votes recorded in favour of, or against, that resolution.
- 10.7 Decisions shall be made by a simple majority vote except for those matters which must be decided by special resolution, as defined by clause 27, where a three quarters majority is required, or in sub-clause 7.9 where a two thirds majority is required.
- 10.8 Upon any question arising at a general meeting of the Council, an Organisational Member has one vote only.
- 10.9 All votes shall be given personally or by way of proxy.
- 10.10 Each voting member is entitled to appoint another member as proxy by notice given to the Secretary, by way of completing a proxy form, to be lodged no later than 2 working days before the meeting in respect to which the proxy is appointed.
- 10.11 In the case of an equality of voting on a question, the presiding officer of the meeting is entitled to exercise a second or casting vote.
- 10.12 A member is not entitled to vote at any general meeting unless all moneys due and payable by such member to the Council have been paid, including the amount of the annual subscription payable in respect of the current financial year.

11. BOARD

- 11.1 The administration of the affairs of the Council shall be vested in the Board which shall be responsible to the members of the Council for carrying out the aims of the Council and such policy as the Council may determine from time to time. The Board shall appoint a Chief Executive Officer responsible for the day to day management of the Council, including the implementation of policy, as delegated by the Board.
- 11.2 The Board shall comprise:
 - (a) the Office Bearers of the Council; and
 - (b) the Ordinary Members of the Board.

- 11.3 Only nominated Members shall be eligible for election to the Board.
- 11.4 A member of the Board shall not be appointed to any salaried office of the Council or any office paid by fees, and no remuneration or other benefit in money or money's worth shall be given by the Council to any member of the Board except:
- (a) repayment of reasonable out-of-pocket expenses incurred at the request of the Council or Board;
 - (b) interest at a rate not exceeding the rate of interest which for the time being is or would be charged by the Council's bankers for money lent to the Council; and
 - (c) reasonable and proper rent for premises let to the Council or its committees by the member;
 - (d) professional or legal fees incurred at the request of the Council or Board.

12. OFFICE BEARERS OF THE COUNCIL

- 12.1 The Office Bearers (officers) of the Council shall be:
- (a) the President of the Council
 - (b) the Vice President
 - (c) the Secretary
 - (d) the Treasurer
 - (e) the Chairperson of the Board.
- 12.2 The Board may choose to co-opt the Immediate Past President, in line with the provisions of clause 14. If co-opted, the Immediate Past President will be appointed for a two-year term and will, at the end of this term, be eligible to be re co-opted. If there is a change of presidency during the two-year co-option, he/she will remain an Ordinary Member of the Board until the end of the term of co-option. If co-opted to the Board, the Immediate Past President will be an Office Bearer of the Council.
- 12.3 The President, Vice President, Secretary and Treasurer are to be elected by the membership of the Council at the Annual General Meeting. The Chairperson of the Board is to be chosen biannually by the Board from within its number.
- 12.4 Elected Office Bearers and the Chairperson shall hold office for a period of two years, with the term of office expiring at the Annual General Meeting two years after election.
- 12.5 Positions falling vacant at each general meeting shall alternate between:
- (a) the President and Secretary;
 - (b) the Vice President and the Treasurer.
- 12.6 Office Bearers shall be eligible for re-election.
- 12.7 In the event of a casual vacancy in any office referred to in sub-clause 12.1, the Board may appoint one of its members or another person deemed appropriate to the vacant office and the person so appointed shall continue to hold office up to and including the conclusion of the term of office of the Officer that the person replaced.

13. ELECTED ORDINARY MEMBERS OF THE BOARD

- 13.1 In addition to the Office Bearers, there shall be six Ordinary Members of the Board elected by the members at the Annual General Meeting. Of these, five shall be elected by Organisational Members to represent the Organisational Members and one shall be an Individual Member elected by the Individual Members to represent the Individual Members.
- 13.2 Elected Ordinary Members shall hold office for a period of two years, with the term of office expiring at the Annual General Meeting two years after election.

- 13.3 The positions of half of the elected Ordinary members shall fall vacant each year and Ordinary Members are eligible to nominate for re-election.
- 13.4 In the event of a casual vacancy occurring in the office of an elected Ordinary Member of the Board, the Board may if deemed necessary appoint a member of the Council or other person from the same category of membership considered appropriate to fill the vacancy until the conclusion of the retiring member's term of office.

14. CO-OPTED MEMBERS OF THE BOARD

- 14.1 The Board has the power to co-opt up to six additional members, each of whom shall have full voting rights on the Board.
- 14.2 The Board may, as part of the procedure for co-option of six members to the Board, co-opt the Immediate Past President or a nominated representative from any Council committee.
- 14.3 The Board may, as part of the procedure for co-option of six members to the Board, co-opt a nominated representative from any Council committee.
- 14.4 When co-opting members, the Board shall attempt to ensure that the Board has:
- (a) gender balance; and/or
 - (b) adequate representation of relevant sectors of the Council's membership including persons of refugee background;
 - (c) although this provision shall not preclude the Board from co-opting persons who in its view most competently shall be able to serve the interests of the Council.
- 14.5 Co-option of members of the Board shall take place at the Board Meeting after the Annual General Meeting or at such other time as deemed appropriate.
- 14.6 In the event of a casual vacancy occurring in the office of a co-opted member who represents a Council committee, the committee has the right to recommend a replacement to the Board.
- 14.7 The term of office for co-opted members other than those who represent committees shall be two years, expiring at the Annual General Meeting two years after co-option.
- 14.8 The positions of half of the Ordinary Members who have been co-opted shall fall vacant each year and Ordinary Members are eligible to be re co-opted.
- 14.9 In the event of the resignation of a member co-opted for reasons other than their representation of a committee, the Board shall decide whether or not to fill the vacancy. If a vacancy is filled, the term of the person doing so shall continue until the expiry of the term of original co-option.

15. ELECTION OF THE BOARD

- 15.1 Nomination of candidates for election as officers of the Council or as elected members of the Board:
- (a) shall be made in writing, with the signatures of the nominator and seconder, both of whom shall be Members of the Council, and the signature of the candidate signifying consent at being nominated; and
 - (b) shall be received by the Secretary of the Council not less than five days before the date fixed for the holding of the Annual General Meeting.
- 15.2 If insufficient nominations are received to fill all vacancies on the Board, the candidates nominated shall be deemed to be elected and further nominations shall be received at the Annual General Meeting.

- 15.3 A ballot for the election of the officers and ordinary members of the Committee shall be conducted at the Annual General Meeting in such usual and proper manner as the Committee shall direct.
- 15.4 If an election is necessary, the outcome shall be decided by a simple majority.
- 15.5 For the purpose of these rules, the position of an Officer or Ordinary Member of the Board becomes vacant if the Officer or Member:
- (a) ceases to represent the Organisational Member of the Council which they represented at the time of their election;
 - (b) becomes insolvent;
 - (c) resigns his/her office by notice in writing given to the Secretary;
 - (d) is removed as provided in clause 21; or
 - (e) dies, develops an incapacity which prevents him/her from discharging duties as a Board member, or in the opinion of the Board, behaves in a manner contrary to the interests of the Council.

16. PROCEEDINGS OF BOARD

- 16.1 The Board shall elect a Chairperson who shall be responsible for chairing the Board meetings.
- 16.2 Notice of Board meetings shall be given at the previous Board meeting or by such other means as the Board may decide upon from time to time.
- 16.3 The Board shall meet as often as necessary to conduct the business of the Council and not less than three times a year.
- 16.4 Questions arising at any meeting of the Board shall be decided by consensus or, if needed, a majority of votes of those present. In case of any equality of votes the person appointed to chair the meeting shall have a second or casting vote.
- 16.5 The quorum for members of the Board to meet shall be one half of the numbers of Board members, including a minimum of two office bearers.
- 16.6 If within three quarters of an hour of the time appointed for a Board meeting a quorum is not present, the meeting may proceed but all decisions must be ratified by a quorate meeting.
- 16.7 The Board may function validly provided its number is not reduced below the quorum. Should unforeseen circumstances mean that the total number of Board members falls below a quorum the remaining Board members may act to appoint interim board members until either a Special General Meeting or the Annual General Meeting.
- 16.8 The Board shall conduct its business in such lawful manner as deemed appropriate.
- 16.9 Additional meetings of the Board may be convened by the President or by written request of any three members of the Board.

17. SECRETARY

- 17.1 The Secretary of the Council shall ensure that minutes of the resolutions and proceedings of each general meeting and each Board meeting are kept and recorded in books provided for that purpose together with a record of the names of persons present at Board meetings, and perform other duties as determined by the Board.

18. CHAIRPERSON

18.1 The Chairperson shall be elected from among Board members and is responsible for presiding over Board meetings and, if delegated (in line with sub-clause 10.4), at Annual General Meetings and Special General Meetings.

19. TREASURER

19.1 The Treasurer of the Council shall:

- (a) oversee the collection and receipt of all moneys due to the Council and the payment of moneys authorised by the Council;
- (b) ensure that correct accounts and books showing the financial affairs of the Council are kept and that these show full details of all receipts and expenditure connected with the activities of the Council;
- (c) submit to each meeting of the Board a statement on the financial affairs of the Council;
- (d) prepare an annual financial report in accordance with the Act.

19.2 The accounting records and books referred to in sub-clause 19.1 shall be available for inspection by members.

20. PUBLIC OFFICER

20.1 The Board shall ensure that a person is appointed as Public Officer.

20.2 The Board may at any time remove the Public Officer and appoint a new Public Officer provided the person appointed is 18 years of age or older and a resident of the Australian Capital Territory.

20.3 The Public Officer shall be deemed to have vacated his/her position in the following circumstances:

- (i) death;
- (ii) resignation;
- (iii) removal by the Board or at a general meeting;
- (iv) bankruptcy or financial insolvency;
- (v) development of an incapacity which prevents the discharge of his/her duties;
- (vi) residency outside Australia.

20.4 When a vacancy occurs in the position of Public Officer the Board shall within 14 days notify the Registrar of Incorporated Associations by the prescribed form and appoint a new Public Officer.

21. TERMINATION OF MEMBERSHIP OF THE BOARD

21.1 A member of the Board who, without tendering an adequate excuse or without seeking leave of absence fails to attend three consecutive Board meetings shall, at the discretion of the Board, to be expressed by a simple majority, be liable to have his/her membership of the Board terminated.

21.2 The termination referred to in sub-clause 21.1 however, shall not affect the person's membership of the Council.

21.3 The Secretary shall, in writing, advise a member of the Board, whose membership under sub-clause 21.1 is liable to be terminated, and on giving reasonable notice, that the Board may consider invoking sub-clause 21.1.

22. FUNDS AND ACCOUNTING

- 22.1 The funds of the Council shall be derived from the fees of members, donations, grants and such other sources approved by the Council.
- 22.2 The income and property of the council shall be used only for promotion of the objects of the Council and shall not be paid or transferred to members by way of dividend, bonus or profit.
- 22.3 All moneys received by the Council shall be deposited in the Council's name in such bank account or accounts as nominated by the Board.
- 22.4 All cheques and documents relating to the bank account(s) shall be signed by any two people from a panel of Board Members and employees approved by the Board.

23. POWER TO BORROW MONEY AND GIVE SECURITY

- 23.1 The Board may raise or borrow money by giving mortgage or cheques or securities as it sees fit provided that such action has been approved by at least three quarters of the Board.

24. AUDIT

- 24.1 The auditor shall examine all accounts, vouchers, receipts, books, etc and furnish a report thereon to the members at the Annual General Meeting. Audits shall be conducted at regular intervals of not more than 12 months.
- 24.2 The auditor shall not be a member or closely related to a member of the Board or Council committees and shall comply with the provisions of the Act.
- 24.3 Subject to sub-clause 24.4 hereof notice of the intention to nominate auditors shall be given to the Secretary at least 21 days before the Annual General Meeting. The Secretary shall send a copy of the nomination to the current auditors at least seven days before the Annual General Meeting. The current auditors shall be entitled to attend the Annual General Meeting and, if they so wish, be heard at the Annual General Meeting.
- 24.4 Where the current auditor submits his/her resignation, or notifies the Secretary of his/her intention not to seek re-election as auditor, sub-clause 24.3 thereof shall not apply.

25. COMMON SEAL

- 25.1 There shall be a seal of the Council which shall contain the words "The Refugee Council of Australia Incorporated".
- 25.2 The seal shall be used on all documents and instruments for which its use has been authorised by the officers.
- 25.3 The Board shall authorise the Secretary and any one Board Member to sign and affix the Common Seal to appropriate documents.
- 25.4 The seal shall be held in the custody of or under the control of the Secretary of the Council.

26. COMMITTEES

- 26.1 A Standing or ad hoc committee can be formed in two ways:
- (a) by the Board perceiving the need for the creation of a committee to deal with a particular issue or issues;
 - (b) by the Board accepting a request for affiliation or inclusion from a group or committee with interests and concerns that coincide with those of the Council.
- 26.2 The Board shall appoint a Board Member who shall be responsible for liaison with the committee and who shall be a member of the committee.

- 26.3 The committee shall have a set of aims and objectives ratified by the Board provided that they are consistent with those of the Council.
- 26.4 The committee shall operate in accordance with guidelines outlining the rights and responsibilities of each party in the relationship and which are drawn up following negotiations between the committee and the Council and approved by the Council.

27. SPECIAL RESOLUTION

- 27.1 Written notice of the intention to propose a special resolution must be given at least 21 days prior to the meeting.
- 27.2 In order for a special resolution to be passed, three quarters of such members of the Council as, being entitled under these rules so to do, vote in person or proxy at the meeting at which it is presented.

28. ALTERATION OF RULES

- 28.1 These Rules may be amended only by a special resolution, as defined by clause 27, approved by three quarters majority of those members of the Council present and voting in person by or proxy at an Annual General Meeting or at a Special General Meeting of the Council called for (or inter alia for) the purpose of dealing with such amendment.

29. WINDING UP

- 29.1 If the Council ceases to exist for any reason whatsoever then, after satisfaction of all its debts and just claims on it, the whole of the assets of the Council shall devolve upon such public body with similar aims as the Council, provided a special resolution, as defined by clause 27, to that effect relating to the distribution of the surplus assets has been passed by the majority of at least three quarters of the members voting in person or by proxy at a Special Meeting, and provided other requirements of the Act have been met.
- 29.2 In the event that the conditions outlined in sub-clause 29.1 are not met, action shall be taken in accordance with sub-clause 10.3.

30. LIABILITY OF MEMBERS

- 30.1 The liability of Members (irrespective of whether they hold a position of Office Bearer or any other position on the Board) to pay for debts and liabilities of the Council shall be limited in all cases to the amount of outstanding membership fees (if any) provided always that nothing in this clause derogates from a member's liability which arises out of the operation of the Act.

APPENDIX 2



Refugee Council
of Australia

RCOA STRATEGIC PLAN – 2016-2021

Updated August 2020

Context

The Refugee Council of Australia (RCOA) is a national non-profit peak body, formed in 1981 to provide a coordinated community voice on refugee and asylum seeker issues. On behalf of its organisational and individual members, it provides information on refugees and people seeking asylum, presenting the case for improvements to policies and support. RCOA's membership includes many of Australia's refugee settlement and asylum related agencies, as well as international development agencies, community groups and organisations concerned about refugee policy.

RCOA receives the largest proportion of its income from individual Australians who support its work, through tax-deductible donations and membership fees. Its other sources of income are organisational membership fees, donated funds managed by the Australian Refugee Foundation and grants from philanthropic trusts, government agencies and non-government organisations.

RCOA is actively involved in dialogue regarding support for refugees and people seeking asylum in Australia and internationally, regularly publishing material and speaking on issues of concern through the media, at conferences and public events and through other community forums. The Council works closely with a variety of national peak organisations² and with international bodies including the Asia Pacific Refugee Rights Network and the International Council of Voluntary Agencies. It engages closely with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) nationally and internationally, participating in UNHCR-convened meetings to advance discussions with governments of other nations and with non-government organisations with common concerns for refugee protection.

RCOA's role and priorities

RCOA has connections across Australia through its many organisational and individual members. Through its strong links with refugee communities and sector networks, RCOA is well positioned to inform and be informed by the broad spectrum of refugee and asylum activities in Australia and internationally.

The central position RCOA holds within the sector in Australia means that it is able to contribute to refugee policy discussions at the highest levels of government in Australia and through international dialogue. It also widely shares information through information and research, active engagement with the media and presentations to schools, community groups and public seminars. RCOA coordinates and promotes the national celebration of Refugee Week. It has promotes involvement in a network of Refugee Welcome Zones with local councils across Australia, encouraging local communities to take positive action towards welcoming refugees.

RCOA maintains a series of networks which meet by teleconference, covering different aspects of asylum policy, domestic refugee settlement issues and international refugee policy. Through these forums, RCOA facilitates information sharing and policy development across Australia. Each year since 1987, RCOA has prepared a community submission on Australia's Refugee and Humanitarian Program for consideration by the Australian Government. This comprehensive document, developed

² The national peak bodies with which RCOA maintains regular contact include the Settlement Council of Australia, Federation of Ethnic Communities Councils of Australia, Australian Council for International Development, Migration Council Australia, Australian Council of Social Service, Migration Institute of Australia and Multicultural Youth Advocacy Network Australia.

through a nationwide consultation process, has helped inform policy development and provided a rich resource for understanding refugee trends in Australia and internationally.

As the key link between Australian NGOs working on refugee issues and UN and international refugee agencies, RCOA coordinates the representation of Australian NGOs on matters of international refugee policy. Through its International Policy Network, RCOA works with member agencies and refugee community representatives to raise common concerns at key global UN meetings.

While working with its member organisations and supporters of all backgrounds, RCOA takes seriously its responsibility to support the advocacy and public voice of Australia's refugee communities. It does this through actively encouraging refugee community members to share their experiences and expertise in its national and international advocacy, community education activities, public events, engagement with the media, network meetings and internal consultation and decision-making processes.

Noting the international impact of Australian policy and, in particular, its impact on conditions experienced by refugees and people seeking asylum in South-East Asia and the Pacific region, RCOA sees the need for Australian civil society to work closely with and support organisations and communities beyond Australia's shores. It does through a two-way sharing of information and, wherever practicable, by facilitating direct support to refugee programs in the Asia-Pacific region.

How RCOA works

As a peak body, RCOA's effectiveness is based on its ability to listen to and work effectively with refugee communities, members and supporters. Four key aspects of this work are:

1. **Listening and learning:** Conducting broad-based consultations, research projects, participation in interagencies and networks, and gathering information and ideas from members and communities.
2. **Building networks for change:** Developing and enhancing links with members, refugee communities, supporters, campaign organisations, coalitions with common interests and international networks.
3. **Sharing collective knowledge:** Publishing the knowledge it has gathered in reports, submissions, media releases, bulletins, web pages, social media, media interviews, education programs, public presentations and information shared with member networks.
4. **Strategic advocacy and action:** Working with like-minded organisations and individuals on national and international advocacy with governments, key decision-makers and opinion leaders, conducting public campaigns and developing or supporting projects to meet identified needs.

RCOA's vision

For the voices of refugees to be heard, the rights of refugees to be respected, the humanity of refugees valued and the contribution of refugees celebrated.

Purpose

To work with its members in promoting the development of humane, lawful and constructive policies towards refugees and people seeking asylum by Australian and other governments and their communities.

Aims

In order to achieve this purpose, the Council pursues the following aims:

- (a) To act as a unifying organisation and to represent its members.
- (b) To promote the empowerment of refugee communities and individuals in Australia and internationally and support the capacity building of the refugee sector in and beyond Australia.
- (c) To monitor, research and present information on issues relating to the needs and circumstances of refugees and people seeking asylum.
- (d) To assist governments and inter-governmental organisations to formulate policy and improve support and services for refugees and people seeking asylum.

- (e) To increase public awareness and media sensitivity towards refugees and people seeking asylum.

Theory of change

In 2017, RCOA adopted the following theory of change, based on its vision, purpose and aims:

To improve public and political support for refugees and people seeking asylum, and achieve a just policy environment, RCOA will coordinate sector wide campaigns, informed by strong policy, research and refugee voices that we leverage through our members.

Goals 2016-2021

During the period 2016-2021, RCOA will work with its members, refugee communities and other relevant sectoral companions towards:

- 1 Promoting, fostering and achieving better opportunities and improved services and support for refugees settling in Australia;
- 2 Promoting, fostering and achieving fairer government policies for people seeking asylum in Australia;
- 3 Promoting, fostering and achieving more effective systems of international protection for refugees and people seeking asylum;
- 4 Promoting, fostering and achieving increased public support for refugees in Australia;
- 5 Supporting the advocacy and public role of Australia's refugee communities;
- 6 Enhancing the capacity of RCOA to achieve its organisational goals.

Objectives 2016-2021

1. Promoting, fostering and achieving better opportunities and improved services and support for refugees settling in Australia (*Settlement issues*)

1.1 Provide opportunities for refugee services, community organisations and people of refugee background to inform RCOA about key settlement issues and to share information on issues, policy and practice. (*Information gathering and networking*)

1.2 Conduct research into high priority refugee settlement issues, exploring examples of good practice in responding to the issues identified. (*Research*)

1.3 Maintain constructive dialogue with government and key decision makers on issues facing refugee and humanitarian entrants and the services which support them. (*Advocacy*)

2. Promoting, fostering and achieving fairer government policies people seeking asylum in Australia (*Asylum issues*)

2.1 Maintain networks to provide members, supporters and people seeking asylum with opportunities to inform RCOA's work on asylum policy issues. (*Information gathering and networking*)

2.2 Monitor and conduct research into critical issues affecting people seeking asylum in Australia. (*Research*)

2.3 Maintain constructive dialogue with government and key decision makers on asylum policy issues. (*Advocacy*)

3. Promoting, fostering and achieving more effective systems of international protection for refugees and people seeking asylum (*International issues*)

3.1 Gather information from individuals, community groups and national and international networks on issues of international refugee protection relevant to Australian policy and communities in Australia. (*Information gathering and networking*)

3.2 Support the protection of refugees and people seeking asylum in the Asia-Pacific region by, where possible, promoting practical partnerships between Australian NGOs and communities and their counterparts in the region. (*International partnerships*)

3.3 Maintain constructive dialogue with UNHCR and (as appropriate) other governments and international bodies on relevant refugee protection and resettlement issues. (*Advocacy*)

4. Supporting the advocacy and public role of Australia's refugee communities (*Refugee community engagement*)

4.1 Support refugee community representatives in their efforts to raise community concerns and ideas with government agencies in Australia and UN and international bodies. (*Advocacy*)

4.2 Promote opportunities for refugee community members to play a greater role in public education initiatives and engagement with the media. (*Public information*)

5. Promoting, fostering and achieving increased public support for refugees and people seeking asylum in Australia (*Public information and campaigns*)

5.1 Promote awareness of national and international refugee issues through the coordination of Refugee Week, other public events, seminars, education programs and the promotion of community welcome initiatives. (*Awareness raising*)

5.2 Provide information on refugee issues to members, supporters and the general public, through regular publications, websites, social networking and responding to requests for information. (*Publications and information*)

5.3 Engage with the Australian media, encouraging balanced reporting of refugee and asylum issues and giving RCOA's perspectives on relevant issues of public interest. (*Media liaison*)

5.4 Work with members, refugee communities, other networks and concerned individuals to campaign for refugee policy reform. (*Campaigns*)

6. Enhancing the capacity of RCOA to achieve its organisational goals (*Governance and finance*)

6.1 Increase public financial support for RCOA's work through fundraising and promoting membership. (*Fundraising and membership*)

6.2 Strengthen the financial and operational viability of RCOA and ensure compliance with legal obligations. (*Finance and administration*)

6.3 Maintain an effective staff team, supported by a human resources strategy which monitors workload and provides appropriate training and support to staff. (*Staffing*)

6.4 Increase the board's capacity to undertake its roles in governance, policy setting and representing a diverse, national membership. (*Board*)