



# Refugee Council of Australia

## REFUGEE COUNCIL OF AUSTRALIA 2020 ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

**Monday 9 November 2020, 12.00pm (AEDT)**  
11.30am SA, 11am Qld, 10.30am NT, 9am WA

Zia Zoom link:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/82979350388?pwd=WnVqcXZjT2w4YnBGU09sRzRzcGNzdz09>

### AGENDA

**1. Welcome and Apologies**

**2. Adoption of AGM Minutes of 11 November 2019** (see minutes attached)

**3. Matters arising from the minutes**

**4. President's Report – Phil Glendenning**

A copy of RCOA's 2019-20 annual report is available online [here](#).

**5. Treasurer's Report**

(includes report from Australian Refugee Foundation)

The RCOA Audited Financial Statement is available online [here](#).

**6. Election of Board Members**

Five Board vacancies are to be filled. Nominations were received for the following positions:

- Vice-President – one nomination received for Professor William Maley
- Treasurer – one nomination received for Adrian Graham
- 1 Individual Member – one nomination received for Maya Cranitch
- 2 Organisational Member Representatives – 3 nominations received for 2 positions: Marc Purcell (Australian Council For International Development), John Roc (Australian Karen Organisation) and Joseph Youhana (Brotherhood of St Laurence).

As the number of nominations for Organisational Member Representatives exceeds the number of vacancies, an election will take place for the 2 Organisational Member Representatives. Only the nominated representatives of current Organisational Members of RCOA will vote in this election.

**7. Motions**

- a. Motions from the floor:** RCOA members have the option of putting forward motions for the RCOA membership at the AGM to consider.

**8. General business**

**9. Forum: Operation Not Forgotten: the Canadian lifeline for refugees sent to Nauru and PNG**

Representatives of MOSAIC in Vancouver, UNHCR's regional office in Canberra and Refugee Council of Australia will provide an update of what has been achieved so far with Operation Not Forgotten and its significance in finding solutions for refugees trapped in Australia's offshore processing regime.

# **MINUTES OF REFUGEE COUNCIL OF AUSTRALIA 2019 ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING**

Held on 11 November 2019 at Colin Biggers and Paisley Lawyers, 2 Park St. Sydney and by Zoom link

**Present:** Phil Glendenning (Edmund Rice Centre), John Roc (Australian Karen Organisation), Beata Ostapiej-Piatkowski (Romero Centre), Caroline Fleay (Curtin University), Abdul Karim Hekmat (UTS), Marc Purcell (ACFID), Ella Dixon (MRC Northern Tasmania), Melika Sheikh Eldin (AMES Australia); Kwame Selormey (Melaleuca Refugee Centre), Rob Floyd (Uniting Church National Assembly), Michael Kunz (Australian Red Cross), Rosa Loria (Sydney Multicultural Community Services), Jackie Perkins, Ai Leen Quah (Quaker Services Australia), Jasmine Turvey (Australia for UNHCR), Sonia Vignjevic (Settlement Services International), Maya Cranitch, Adrian Graham, William Maley, Ali Nur, Eileen Wahab, Liza Hazelton, Kevin Bain (RCOA individual members), Kate O'Malley (UNHCR), Arash Bordbar (Asia Pacific Refugee Rights Network), Najeeba Wazefadost (Asia Pacific Network of Refugees). Joyce Fu (People Just Like Us), Paul Power, Kelly Nicholls, Rebecca Langton (RCOA staff), Audrey Takavarasha, Helen Bui, Dominique Gaitt (RCOA volunteers),

**Apologies:** Karin Vasquez (Focus Connect), Jenny Barrera (Wyndham Community & Education Centre), Paul Linossier (Uniting Vic.Tas), Alison O'Neill (Migrant Resource Centre Tasmania), Catherine Scarf (AMES), Deb Stringer (Australian Refugee Association), Dale West (Centacare Catholic Family Services).

## **1. Welcome**

The meeting opened at 3pm. Maya Cranitch welcomed participants at the venue in Sydney and via Zoom.

## **2. Minutes of AGM held on 12 November 2018**

The minutes of the AGM of 12 November 2018 were accepted (moved Ali Nur, seconded Beata Ostapiej-Piatkowski, motion carried). There were no matters arising.

## **3. Election of Board members**

Maya Cranitch noted the two-year terms of the President, the Secretary and three of the Organisational Member representatives expired with the AGM and that nominations had been called and received. She announced that five nominations had been received for the five positions.

- Phil Glendenning nominated and was re-elected unopposed to the position of President.
- Caroline Fleay nominated and was elected unopposed to the position of Secretary.
- Melika Sheikh-Eldin (AMES Australia), Ella Dixon (Migrant Resource Centre of Northern Tasmania) and Kwame Selormey (Melaleuca Refugee Centre) were unopposed elected to the three Organisational Member representative positions.

Two Board members are retiring this year: Ali Nur who has served as Secretary of the Board for past six years, since joining Board in 2011, and Abdul Karim Hekmat who served as a Board member since 2013.

## **4. President's Report**

Phil Glendenning indicated that 2019 was a year of mixed emotions: the results of the Federal Election; the thousands of people in agonising limbo awaiting status resolution; the hope resulting from the passing of the Medevac legislation but now faced with uncertainty resulting from the possibility of repeal: asylum seekers facing destitution as a result of changes to the SRSS Services payments; the refugees and asylum seekers now detained in Papua New Guinea. Phil noted that out of over 20 million refugees worldwide under UNHCR's mandate, less than 1% are resettled; this is not a queue, more like a ticket in a lottery: Phil noted that, according to UNHCR statistics, Australia was 14<sup>th</sup> overall for the number of refugees recognised or resettled in 2018, 20<sup>th</sup> per capita and 60<sup>th</sup> based on gross domestic product.

Refugee advocacy has grown from strength to strength reflected in the formation this year of the Global Refugee-led Network and the Asia Pacific Network of Refugees, following global and Asia-Pacific summits supported in 2018 by RCOA in partnership with others. Phil acknowledged the role of Paul Power in supporting this growth and noted that partnerships between refugee communities will strengthen the voice of refugees. Phil acknowledge Kelly Nicholls' work in relation to the Medevac legislation and efforts of RCOA staff in the coordination and publicity of 300 Refugee Week events across Australia in June. Phil also thanked the two retiring board members Ali Nur and Abdul Karim Hekmat for their contribution to RCOA.

## **5. Treasurer's Report**

In his report as Treasurer, Adrian Graham noted that there had been a 5% increase in income in the financial year to June 2019. This includes an increase on the previous year of \$190,000 in the transfer from ARF due to a decrease in grants and public donations. We have seen a significant growth in individual donations over the past few years and investment in fundraising which was necessary for the expansion of the Council's work. The Council has pulled back on deficits and is looking to produce a break-even budget in 2019-20. Adrian thanked members and supporters for their continuing financial support.

## **6. Motions from the floor**

**Resolution:** The Refugee Council expresses its profound appreciation for the services on the Board of Dr Ali Nur and Mr Abdul Karim Hekmat and offers to both of them its very best wishes for the future (moved William Maley, seconded Phil Glendenning, motion carried).

## **7. Questions from the floor**

Rob Floyd noted that RCOA had worked closely with a range of organisations on joint campaigns relating to offshore processing and asked about the government's intention to repeal the Medevac legislation. RCOA replied that the fate of the Medevac legislation is now in the hands of Senator Lambie. There was further discussion of the approach being taken to putting the case to Senator Lambie for not supporting the repeal legislation.

Joyce Fu asked for the views of the panel relating to the Bill tabled by Andrew Wilkie which proposes that Australia support regional settlement of refugees. Paul considers that this approach assumes a universal desire for resettlement to Australia, when in fact many refugees want to return to their country of origin under the right conditions or the opportunity to live with adequate legal protection in their current country of asylum. Paul said Australia needed to listen more closely to the voices of refugees and try to understand the issues in the region from the perspectives of our neighbours. Kate O'Malley of UNHCR agreed that we needed to think about solutions for the region not just solutions for Australia. William Maley added that Australia needs to be very careful about lecturing other States when it isn't prepared to do the heavy lifting itself, noting that the Bali Process and the 2012 Expert Panel on Asylum Seekers delivered relatively little.

## **8. Panel discussion: The first Global Refugee Forum: What can we expect?**

Kate O'Malley (UNHCR) introduced the Forum to be hosted by UNHCR in Geneva in December this year: with more than 1400 delegates expected to attend. The approach reflects the Compact emphasising the importance of refugee voices. The aim is to find ways to support host countries, easing pressure on them and identifying strategies to increase refugee self-reliance. Strategies could involve seeking support from the countries from which refugees have fled. Pledges will be sought from governments prior to the Forum, possibly relating to education places, and new sponsorship programs to create additional places in countries in the region.

Najeeba Wazefadost (Asia Pacific Network of Refugees) spoke about the gender audit process which had been taking place through the development of the Global Compact on Refugees and was continuing through the Global Refugee Forum process. She also discussed the needs of refugees in the region which had been highlighted through the new Asia Pacific Network of Refugees, as well as global efforts to push for much more effective and meaningful engagement of refugees in the development of policies and programs which aim to address their needs.

Arash Bordbar (Asia Pacific Refugee Rights Network and UNHCR Global Youth Advisory Council) said that the Forum would consider issues such as access to services (including education) for youth. Strategies which include refugee youth who could propose an Action Plan with allocation of tasks to diverse networks of youth. Arash noted that while telling refugee stories was important for raising awareness, we need to use the knowledge and direct experience as evidence of needs and engage refugees in planning the way forward. Communication between refugee youth, including those unable to travel, about their experiences should be shared and plans developed together.

Paul Power (RCOA) concluded by saying that UNHCR is keen to ensure that the Global Compact on Refugees is not a lifeless document, but a means of stimulating concrete action.

The meeting closed at 4.35pm.