Dear Vic/Tas Uniting for Refugees Network Members,

**HAPPY NEW YEAR!**   Can I still get away saying that on 14 February??

This will be a quick update to start off the ‘new year’, but there’s a few events that I wanted you to know about .. some that are coming up in the next couple of weeks!

Please remember that if you are on Facebook, we also have a Network page there that we update regularly in-between these monthly Network update emails – you can find that here:  <http://bit.ly/VicTasUniting>

**Upcoming Events:**

**“What has happened to our values?” with**[**Julian Burnside OA QC**](https://www.facebook.com/events/398767450457503/?ref=1&action_history=%5B%7B%22surface%22%3A%22permalink%22%2C%22mechanism%22%3A%22surface%22%2C%22extra_data%22%3A%5B%5D%7D%5D)**- 19 February**

The Progressive Christian Network (PCN) of Victoria invites you to “*What has happened to our values*?” with Julian Burnside

**WHEN:**     Sunday 19 February 2017 3.00pm to 5.00pm

**WHERE:**   Ewing Memorial Centre of Stonnington Uniting Church, Cnr. Burke Road and Coppin Street, Malvern East

(Melway 59 G12 Parking in Coppin Street)

JULIAN BURNSIDE AO QC is well known as an eloquent and passionate advocate for justice and human rights. He is a barrister based in Melbourne and specialises in commercial litigation.

He is a former President of Liberty Victoria, and has acted pro bono in many human rights cases, in particular concerning the treatment of asylum seekers.

He acted for the Ok Tedi natives against BHP, for the Maritime Union of Australia in the 1998 waterfront dispute against Patrick Stevedores. He was Senior Counsel assisting the Australian Broadcasting Authority in the “Cash for Comment” inquiry and was senior counsel for Liberty Victoria in the Tampa litigation.

He is the author of a number of books including Watching Brief (Scribe 2007), a collection of his essays and speeches about the justice system and human rights, and From Nothing to Zero (Lonely Planet 2001), a book of letters written by asylum seekers held in Australia’s detention camps.

In 2004 he was elected as a Living National Treasure. In 2009 he was made an Officer of the Order of Australia. In 2014 he was awarded the Sydney Peace prize.

In this address Julian Burnside will address a question in the minds and hearts of many Australians: “What has happened to our values?”. In considering what is making Australian society more unjust he will outline an alternative approach to the present unjust and inhumane treatment of refugees arriving by boat.

PCNV meeting cost is $7 ($5 for members). All moneys received for this meeting will be donated to assist asylum seekers.

To see the event page on Facebook, visit:  <http://bit.ly/PCNJulian>

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**Palm Sunday Walk for Justice for Refugees – 9 April**

Once again we are planning to take to the streets on Palm Sunday – hopefully with thousands of others – with our placards and plaques of refugee support messages!

The Melbourne Walk kicks off at 1.30pm (with music) and 2.00pm with the speeches on Sunday 9April at the State Library in Swanston Street.

We will be circulating details of the regional walks and any in Tasmania as soon as details are confirmed for those events as well.   If you know of any happening in your area outside of Melbourne, please do let me know so that we can make sure they’re added to a list that’s being compiled by some people within the refugee sector!

In the next week, we will have A4 and A3 size flyers, and an A4 folded handout with some more information about the things that we see as our current concerns in the way we treat refugees and people seeking asylum in this country.   If you would like multiple copies of either for use in your social justice group or Congregation, please let me know and I’ll be happy to send some out to you!

**Resources:**

**National Council of Churches in Australia:  Day of Prayer and Fasting**

The first Sunday of Lent, **5 March 2017**, has been named as a day of prayer and fasting for refugees and people seeking asylum.

The National Council of Churches in Australia has pulled together resources to assist with reflection, prayer, reading and study.  These documents represent a collection of some of the wonderful resources that have been gathered from across their member Churches.

You can find those resources [here](http://bit.ly/NCCAPrayer)

**Campaign and Action Updates:**

People have been asking us what they **can do now** to help - and here's a simple action that everyone can participate in this week!  On the back of us signing the sector-wide statement that appeared recently in the Australian (<http://www.refugeecouncil.org.au/media/open-statement-calling-immediate-action-offshore-detention/>), you can call or email the Prime Minister and Leader of the Opposition and tell them [#WeCanDoBetter](https://www.facebook.com/hashtag/wecandobetter?source=feed_text&story_id=621828614690873) and we want them to [#BringThemHere](https://www.facebook.com/hashtag/bringthemhere?source=feed_text&story_id=621828614690873)

**Malcolm Turnbull**:
Parliament Office: 02 6277 7700
Electorate Office: 02 9327 3988
Malcolm.Turnbull.MP@aph.gov.au or [http://malcolmturnbull.com.au/contact](https://l.facebook.com/l.php?u=http%3A%2F%2Fmalcolmturnbull.com.au%2Fcontact&h=ATOukIr-6DOe1Jf2DGaMsOaj17Tl6NU_HkFu77PJKiBOlBrWRaZ-mQ07735G84Tbnec245_GXs1Y4oGg0OaEb5uRVOIN2JBqyfCik1M-RuMbKklRauwhbgsUC2P6GPqjhZr6CQ&enc=AZO6WpkopcIXQolB81RkK343us9f6v9eI6CR8u3BYWfjxWQFfSsGkq-Kpf8gGjk5xrLY0e_dHf8afMnetuFrZlthf24JumnyETfm1srxwM_L-lrsMFkIvxreYbLODO02PP6z_OeZ-gZ57kPjOjYaNrPHyRfDgt2kXVjQS_0F1e97XYTR9xcTJHfT4_8DcOE_KqSsdsA_LB8hJ58sQnodoJhG&s=1)

**Bill Shorten**:
Parliament Office: 02 6277 4022
Electorate Office: 03 9326 1300
Bill.Shorten.MP@aph.gov.au

Points to make:

\*  We need leadership.

\*  It is time for you to take responsibility for the lives of people on Manus Island and Nauru.

\*  We need you to close the camps and bring people here to safety.

\*  People in offshore detention are in danger.

\*  The ongoing uncertainty and chaos is causing fear and harm.

\*  Our community wants people to be safe from harm.

\*  People around the country want a bipartisan approach to ending the political games.

\*  We need leadership and action, not more excuses.

\*  The lives of people in detention are Australia’s responsibility.

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**Australia waits until pregnant woman is critical condition before helping her**

After over a month of lobbying we heard that a heavily [pregnant woman](https://chilout.nationbuilder.com/r?u=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.theguardian.com%2Fworld%2F2017%2Fjan%2F26%2Fdoctors-plead-for-pregnant-refugee-on-nauru-to-be-moved-to-australian-hospital&e=6be54b5c8489ddac7ac6958c81ae67e1&utm_source=chilout&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=feb17_newsl&n=6) in Nauru had finally been flown into Australia for emergency treatment. The fact that we waited to move her here until she was in a critical condition (37 weeks pregnant with pre-eclampsia and her baby was in the breech position) is both heartbreaking and wrong.  Thank you to all of you who wrote letters or called the offices of the Prime Minister or the Department’s Chief Medical Officer asking for them to bring her to Australia for urgent medical treatment!

**Network activities in 2017:**

**Uniting for Refugees Network Survey**

I promise that this will be my last mention of this .. but **today I’m down on bended knees requesting a response** from people in this Network to the survey that was sent out late last year.   We had such a great response in 2015 but only a small handful of responses received in late 2016 (our lesson is not to do them at the end of the year next time) but if you would be prepared to take the time to fill out the survey, it would be **really helpful** for us to hear from you.

I have attached another copy of the survey to make things easier (with the new, new deadline), and will look forward to receiving your replies in the next few weeks!

**Refugee Week 2017**

The dates for Refugee Week this year have been announced – it will be held from **Sunday 18 June to Saturday 24 June, 2017**.

Please mark these dates in your calendars and diaries, and stay tuned for further information about activities that we’ll be doing during this week.  We have some exciting things being planned!

**Migrant and Refugee Sunday 2017**

While you have those diaries open, please also mark down **Sunday 27 August 2017** as Migrant and Refugee Sunday.   Again, we will be in touch closer to the time with some more resources and details about events happening in conjunction with that day.

I look forward to being in touch again next month!

Warm regards - Jill

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| **Jill Ruzbacky** Social Justice Officer, Justice & International Mission**Commission for Mission**130 Little Collins St Melbourne 3000**t  (03) 9251 5266  | f  (03) 9251 5241  | m  0417 878 982**e  jill.ruzbacky@victas.uca.org.auw  [victas.uca.org.au](http://victas.uca.org.au/)       |     |  |

*TTY users phone 133 677 then ask for 03 9251 5200*
*Speak and Listen (speech-to-speech relay) users phone 1300 555 727 then ask for 03 9251 5200*