

Canberra Walk for Refugees 2018: Adam and Ned's Sydney to Canberra Walk

The campaign is based around a charity walk from Sydney to Canberra. The entire project runs from **Saturday February 24** (launch in Sydney). Then the team of walkers take a fortnight to walk to Canberra and we have a rally at the end on **Sunday 11 March** in Canberra. We would like to invite people to participate in any way they are able to - various options are available whether they can travel to Sydney or Canberra or not.

Adelaide lawyer Adam Richards and his 14 year old son Ned are the ones walking. In last year's Walk they journeyed almost 1200km from Adelaide to Canberra over summer, which took them around 5 weeks. They walked an average of 30km per day over that time, with others across Australia doing their own walks to chip in kilometres to give Ned breaks when he needed them.

This year we are hoping to make the Canberra Walk for Refugees a national event that engages even more people. We hope to make it large enough that it will build on the media support we had last year and make this event more newsworthy, garnering support from all the Australian and international media.

We are not political. We are delighted to have the support of **Amnesty International Australia** and the **ASRC**, whose **CEO Kon Karapanagiotidis** will hopefully be at the Sydney rally and walking the first 10km with us. If he can't do that he is invited to the Canberra Rally instead.

The Canberra Walk for Refugees' key message is that the issue of offshore detention has gone beyond a matter of politics and is instead a mainstream humanitarian issue. Offshore detention in any format no longer has the support of most Australians regardless of their politics. It is both untenable and unworkable and Australia must find alternatives. We aim to create an event that is large enough that it serves to normalise the idea that asylum seeker policy can change and must move away from having its basis in fear.

Marches and protests of various kinds on these issues have been going on for years and politicians often try to find ways to spin or minimise their impact and message. We are keen to do something different and something which is relatable to average Aussies. This would enable the issue to shift from being dismissible as a fringe political issue to a mainstream humanitarian one. Together we can make it clear that you don't have to be a "bleeding heart" or a "leftie" to be committed to finding a different, more compassionate way in which to respond to refugees and asylum seekers in this country.

Offshore detention won't end until the government realises that these policies do not enjoy the support of most Australians, and that what people want is policies which provide for our safety and protection without harming the people who are seeking their own safety with us. It is critical that we do not perpetuate the kinds of harm which current policies produce, but instead we stand for a just, compassionate, wise response to this issue irrespective of exactly where people stand on the political spectrum.

To that end there are a variety of ways that people could contribute to the campaign:

1) **Attend one or both of the rallies.** The **Sydney launch rally is Saturday 24 February**. The **Canberra Parliament House rally is Sunday 11 March**. If anyone wants to organise a bus and a road trip, feel free!

2) To **join in and walk** for a time with the team on the road during the fortnight of the walk. Different locations and meeting points will be available on Facebook, and people could meet up with Ned and Adam on the road for any time or distance at all. This is more practical for locals of Sydney and Canberra so please, alert all your contacts in those two cities and see what groups they might get together. Or, of course, head to the walk with a group of your own on a road trip!

3) **Participate in the social media campaign.** This is designed to be easy, flexible and high impact. It is also where we anticipate the most involvement from people outside of NSW and the ACT, and where we need the most assistance.

(a) Take a photo of yourself holding a sign with **#CanberraWalkForRefugees**, post it to our facebook page and essentially help us send that image viral, much like the Ice Bucket campaign for ALS research was. In your post, add a message of hope and support to encourage the folk on Manus and Nauru. Individuals can do this but group photos are welcome too, so groups of friends, churches, schools, and other community groups can do this too. For this to go viral, we really need as many people as possible to not only do it, but to let us know they are doing it, and to share, share share! There are instructions for how to do this on the social media event page: **Social Media Campaign**
<https://www.facebook.com/events/2102339946665527/>

(b) **Join us live on Twitter and Facebook** during the events, and to publicise both the Sydney-Canberra Walk and the Social Media Campaign among their own contacts and followers.

(c) Social Media participants can **hold their own walk in their local area** during that fortnight (with as much publicity, signs, fanfare as possible) and keep track of their kilometres. Those distances are then tallied and added to the main walk for a larger impact. This is an additional key option for church, school and community groups. You don't need to go to Sydney to do a walk. Organise your own, make it as large as you can, choose your own distance and off you go. Imagine people doing that all over Australia! Imagine if the total distance covered was the same as from Canberra to Manus and Nauru! One of our catchphrases is "we go there, to bring them to safety", so that would be brilliant. It can be as simple as getting a group of people to meet at an oval or on a street somewhere, bring along their own signs and go for a walk of any length together. Tell the people you see why you are doing it and refer them to our social media campaign too!

We are conscious that most people will be unable to attend a rally or to come and walk on the road in person. For that reason, the **Social Media Campaign** is a key aspect of this event. Participating in any way would be a significant contribution to the message.

Petition

Finally, we'd like to refer you to two existing petitions relating to conditions on Manus and Nauru that are currently before Parliament and therefore present a unique opportunity to be heard. There are a great number of petitions which circulate online but it is difficult to get them to Parliament! Instead of running our own petition this year, we are encouraging people to sign these. Please sign them if you agree with what they call for, and share the links on facebook so that more people will be able to do the same.

One petition calls for an end to offshore detention and the formulation of humane policies for asylum seeker processing. The other petition calls for an improvement in the care provided in those detention centres. Fresh food, games and art supplies are now banned, visiting times shortened and must be booked well in advanced, and the number of detainees limited to one at a time instead of a group. These changes serve no purpose other than to further demoralize the detainees and make it harder for advocates in Australia to provide care and relief to them.

They are e-petitions, so signing them involves filling in an online form with your name and email address, and then clicking on a link which the Parliamentary website will send to you to "confirm" it.

Their links are:

https://www.aph.gov.au/.../.../Petitions_General/Petitions_List...
https://www.aph.gov.au/.../.../Petitions_General/Petitions_List...

The Canberra Walk for Refugees is a national campaign to attract the most involvement of Australians from all walks of life, and the most publicity possible. We will not stand for offshore detention, so we are walking to end it. Please participate in any way you can, spread the word amongst your networks, friends and family, and actively share the page and the social media campaign event on Facebook.

Canberra Walk for Refugees Page

<https://www.facebook.com/canberrawalkforrefugees/>

Links to the rallies in NSW and ACT are available on this page too.

Social Media Campaign

<https://www.facebook.com/events/2102339946665527/>

Further information:

<https://www.facebook.com/canberrawalkforrefugees>

t: @walkforrefugees, #CanberraWalkForRefugees

e: info@canberrawalkforrefugees.org.au

Chris Schmidt, Co- convenor: 0459 573 941

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Adam Richards, Convenor: 0411 220 660 (messages, text).