

Safe Harbour

A small group of Adelaide-based activists have devised a project aimed at persuading the government (whether it be the current Coalition, or, after the next Federal election, the ALP) to close the Manus Island and Nauru concentration camps and finally, finally, begin to treat all refugees and asylum seekers in the “care” of the Commonwealth with humanity and compassion.

We have received \$4,500 in funding for the project from the Suzanne Elliott Charitable Trust, and we may apply for a small quick response grant from the Adelaide City Council.

The Goals: to draw the attention of the public to the on-going detention of refugees and asylum seekers on Nauru and Manus Island, and viable alternatives to this cruel regime; to engage the public - children as well as adults - in supporting refugees and asylum seekers, including those already in the community, and those still in off-shore prisons.

In the unlikely event all the off-shore centres are closed during the time the installation is on display, it will still go ahead, with the information unchanged, and the final message tweaked to say “Never Again”.

The Timing: this is really important. We need it to happen over the coming summer, well before the next Federal election, scheduled to be in or before May next year. We had our launch on Monday 10th December 2018 and what a wonderful event that was!

Who is involved: growing numbers of refugee supporters and advocates, both individuals and organisations, plus well known South Australian artists, musicians, and a professional set designer and builder.

What we have in mind: A series of “pop-up” installations centred around a 2 to 3 metre painted plywood boat. This large boat will act as a magnet to people of all ages, who will be able to paint and decorate small balsa wood boats – initially 500 in number - with their own messages. These small boats, interspersed with other boats made from re-used core flute, will then be “planted” around the large boat to become part of a growing, highly visible and beautiful installation.

The first installation will be in Whitmore Square on 5th January, 2019, between 9 a.m. and 5 p.m. Other ‘pop-ups’ will follow, for instance on 19th Jan in Wellington Square. As well as painting a boat, the public will have a chance to access lesser-known facts about what really goes on in the off-shore detention camps, and facts and myths about the treatment of refugees and asylum seekers, in the community and in detention in Australia.

At the end of the project, we plan to deliver the large boat, and probably lots of the small ones, to appropriate destinations such as the Dept of Immigration (Home Affairs?) or to politician’ electoral offices, preferably in a blaze of publicity.

We are also negotiating with the Migration Museum around the possibility of having the boat displayed there.

Some of the finer details are yet to be locked in; many will depend on the extent to which people are willing to lend their energies to the project. But our aim is to create a stunning piece of community art which will change the conversation around the treatment of refugees and people seeking asylum in recent years.

Keen to get involved? We need your help

Contact Mij Tanith 0405 086 533

Register as a volunteer at smeh@internode.on.net