

How To Run A Local ChilOut Information Session



Pressure for change in the policy of indefinite mandatory detention of asylum seekers has to come from the grass roots. ChilOut encourages you to run an information session in your local area. This pamphlet has all the information you need to get started. Remember there will be many like-minded supporters to share the workload, provide encouragement and exchange ideas. ChilOut will help you all the way.

Getting Started

1. Form a working party with other ChilOut supporters in your area. The ChilOut Meetings Coordinator, meetings@chilout.org, can put you in contact with them.
2. Decide on the structure and theme for the session. ChilOut can help with details of previous sessions and other ideas.
3. Consider your target audience. Will it be committed, ambivalent, searching, antagonistic or a mix?
4. Consider what questions they may ask. Anticipate arguments and be prepared to counter with documented facts. Set goals for your information session:
 - to share information
 - to combat misinformation
 - to help change people's negative views
 - to show people how they can help
 - to form a local action group, and, ultimately,
 - to change government policy.
5. Consider the costs you will need to cover: advertising; venue hire; speakers' travel; "Thank You" gifts; supper. Will you need to ask for a donation?

Two to three months ahead

1. Set a date that suits speakers, venue, etc, and avoids school holidays and major events.
2. Plan the length of time of your session; two hours is probably long enough. Work out a draft program including how many speakers to have, how much time for each and how much Question and Answer time to allow.
3. Book a local venue, one that is free, if possible. For example, community centre, service club or a local hall. Ask your local council about venues. Note: Investigate possible public liability insurance requirements when booking the venue.
4. Book speakers. The ChilOut Meetings Coordinator can help. If you invite a high profile speaker, first establish their availability and then book the venue to fit in with them.
5. Consider a mix of speakers; some on the reasons why people seek asylum; some who have visited detention centres and can describe conditions there; a refugee who can tell his or her own story; a local person whom the audience already know and respect. Personal stories always strike a chord and cannot easily be dismissed or disputed. Make sure you have a strong chairperson or facilitator.

Six weeks ahead

1. Confirm the date, time, venue and aims of meeting with the speakers. Discover any special needs such as overhead projector (OHP), video, Power Point presentation, etc. Confirm the title and subject matter of each talk and the times allocated to speakers. Advise each speaker of the topics other speakers will cover.
2. Meet with working party and allocate tasks such as: publicity, sound system, OHP, video, supper, sales and resources, welcomer at the session, etc. Prepare a contingency plan to cover non-appearance of essential speakers and helpers.
3. Decide if you wish to offer refreshments before or afterwards. ChilOut has found that inviting people to stay for “a cuppa and a chat” after a meeting to be very effective and adds to the community feel of the event.
4. Prepare resources. Arrange through ChilOut for merchandise and ChilOut commitment forms and pamphlets. Consider how you are going to set up for these and for a collection point for donations on the night
5. Consider other resources, for example leaflets from other refugee organisations, books and other merchandise for sale.

Four weeks ahead

Publicity. Begin advertising in local newspapers. Most have a section on community events. Contact local reporters who may write articles and assist in other ways. Promote the event on community radio, the ChilOut web site and Call to Action, the newsletters of local churches, service clubs, community groups, etc.

One Week Before

Make final contact with speakers and confirm details. Prepare a check list for the day. Plan a meeting of the action group for several weeks after the meeting.

On the Day

1. Run through your checklist for the day. Ensure your chairperson has a running order for the meeting with the key things to say and is aware of alternatives and the contingency plan.
2. At the end of the meeting, encourage people to become involved and to complete the ChilOut commitment form. Invite them to join your local action group and announce the details of the follow up meeting of the group.
3. Thank everyone for their participation.

Afterwards

Debrief and reassess the guidelines and checklists for the event. Is there room for improvement? Send ChilOut commitment forms to the postal address below.

Children Out Of Detention (ChilOut) is a group of parents and citizens opposed to the mandatory detention of children in Australian immigration detention centres. We are appalled that Australia's treatment of asylum seekers breaches several human rights treaties to which we are a signatory, in particular the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Please visit our website.
Become informed. Become involved.



www.chilout.org

Send us your contact details via our web site and we will include you in our regular email updates.

Web: www.chilout.org
Email: friends@chilout.org
Postal: Friends of Children in Detention
PO Box 811
Neutral Bay NSW 2089

For help with your information session send an email to the ChilOut Meetings Coordinator,
meetings@chilout.org.