



# Yongah Hill 2013 Convergence Booklet

- A call to action -

*Yongah Hill detention centre, 26<sup>th</sup>–28<sup>th</sup> of April, 2013*

*We will go to Yongah Hill,  
to protest against mandatory detention.*

*We will raise our voices high,  
in objection to the 'Pacific Solution'.*

*We will defy and spurn the ideologies,  
that these prisons are built upon.*

*We will challenge and confront the fences before us,  
as well as the walls in minds and hearts.*

*We will bring hope to the refugees,  
and they will know that they are not forgotten.*

*We will go to reject racism and fear of the 'other',  
to welcome the stranger with compassion and understanding.*

*We will teach to and learn from each other,  
because wisdom and knowledge are our weapons.*

*We go as much for our own liberation and freedom,  
as we do for theirs.*

*Because we are all human,  
and our rights are all connected.*

*Because violating the rights of one,  
endangers the rights of all.*

*Because there is no 'them' and 'us',  
there is only 'we'.*

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# 1. Introduction

**1.1 Yongah Hill 2013.** Over the three days of April 26<sup>th</sup>–28<sup>th</sup> 2013, people from all around Australia will converge on the Yongah Hill Immigration Detention Centre near Northam in Western Australia. There they will participate in a Refugee Rights National Convergence. There will be a variety of actions, protests, meetings, workshops and educational sessions designed to cater to a broad constituency that is opposed to mandatory detention and offshore processing. In support there will be events and protests around Australia and internationally.

Some people going to Yongah Hill will be long time activists in the area of refugee rights and human rights. Others will never have been to a protest before. Some will belong to non-government organisations, unions, political parties, churches or other activist groups and campaigns. There will be people there purely as individuals acting on their own conscience and initiative. Some will be there for the whole weekend while others may stay for just a day or even for a single event.

What they will have in common is an opposition to Australia's harsh response to asylum seekers. What they will share is a deep concern for the direction that the major political parties are taking Australia and the appeal to and incitement of racist and xenophobic sentiment. They will all be there because they want to make a difference, to change the system, to prevent the injustice, suffering and waste that mandatory detention causes.

**1.2 Purpose of this booklet.** This handbook is intended to provide the information that people attending the Yongah Hill convergence will need to;

- be aware of the travel timetable
- know where we are going
- bring the appropriate clothing and personal items
- understand why we should go
- know what to expect from the police
- make informed decisions
- stay safe
- participate constructively.

This handbook is not intended to preempt any decision made by those participating in the convergence. The main function is to provide information and the benefit of history

and knowledge to the participants in the hope that this will enhance the experience and facilitate a good outcome, however the participants ultimately decide to define that.

**1.3 Why we should go.** Just like the remote detention centres of the Howard era, places like Yongah Hill use isolation to discourage public scrutiny and protests in particular. It is a case of ‘Out of public sight, we can tell whatever lies we like without the public developing any sympathy for refugees’.

We now see a determination by dominant elements within the Coalition to whip up racism and xenophobia. There are still media and political forces intent on inciting resentment and hatred by spreading lies and misinformation about refugees. We see that at the very least the ALP leadership are being utter cowards in not putting up any resistance to this. At worst it demonstrates a political and philosophical commitment by elements within the ALP to using and inciting racism and xenophobia for reasons other than short-term electoral interests. Other than some of the minor political parties, there is no formal political opposition to these policies and laws. There is only those of us in the community to create that opposition.

Refugees are seen by some as a way to deflect and displace anger and insecurity over a range of social and economic issues.

***Let us be clear that there are forces at work that don't want us to be thinking about job security or health care. They don't want us to be concerned about climate change, industrial relations or a changing social landscape. They want us to be afraid of and hateful towards refugees. These forces are literally intent on using refugees as scapegoats.***

We must understand that it is largely the government and corporate media interests who control the language and terminology of the public discourse. They define who is ‘us’ and who is ‘the other’. If governments can deny refugees the basic right to not be detained without charge or trial, just because they are defined as ‘other’, then they can do it to any group that can be defined as ‘other’. This can be people who are gay, single parents, unemployed, unions members, or who simply voted for the wrong party. Already we see the use of detention without charge or trial has crept into Australia’s draconian anti-terrorism legislation. Although this technically applies to all, in reality it’s accepted because it’s targeted at Muslims. We have to wonder, ‘who’s next?’.

***It is ironic that this sort of persecution, based on deliberately manipulated definitions of ‘other’ is what refugees are fleeing from. This is precisely why this issue is pertinent to everyone.***

There is no best way to oppose these ideas and policies. However there is no doubt that to travel to detention camps directly challenges the very reasons they are sited remotely. This makes a strong statement of commitment and dissent and directly contests the legitimacy

of these places and laws.

More than a decade of experience tells us that our protest and public actions are among the very few things that push back against all the negative messages that the detention system, media and politicians constantly bombard the refugees with.

***These convergences communicate to the refugees in detention in a very powerful and meaningful way. Knowing that there are people on the outside who are opposed to the system really does help people survive the system.***

Mainstream media coverage is not all important but it would be wrong to consider it unimportant. Previous convergences at detention centres attracted people from all over Australia and received effective media coverage. This was damaging to the credibility of the policies and did help shift public perception. It also lets the broader community know that the existence of these places and laws are contested.

This is especially important for those who disagree with the policies, but feel isolated and outnumbered, lacking confidence to speak out and object. There is a solid and by no means small minority who don't agree with these laws. However, because the loudest voices in our society are hostile to refugees it can be hard to feel that this is the case.

The academic research shows that those who are sympathetic to refugees drastically underestimate the sympathy for their views, while those who are hostile to refugees overestimate the popularity of their views. The hostile voices are the loudest, not because they are the most popular, but because they have access to or control large sections of the mainstream media and have positions of power and influence. This in turn influences and drives much of the public opinion that is hostile to refugees.

***Convergences help give us a counter voice. It is one of the ways that we can have our collective voice heard.***

Convergences create important experiences and often become watershed moments for people in their journey from passive disagreement to active opposition. Sharing this experience creates bonds. It reinforces our commitment to this important social justice issue. It is an amazing opportunity to teach and learn, to meet new people and make new friends. Convergences teach us about the power we have when we work together, they encourage us to be bold and ambitious. They help us believe that we can achieve change.

***There are more than enough reasons to go, there are more than enough people who agree with us. We just have to make the journey, challenge the ideologies, show our commitment and mobilize to do it.***

**1.4 When and where.** The convergence will run from Friday the 26<sup>th</sup> to Sunday the 28<sup>th</sup> of April. More details are given in section 2.1. Up to date details of the proposed program for the weekend can be found at the convergence website, <http://refugee-rights.net/converge>. The Yongah Hill Immigration Detention Centre is

some 90 km east of Perth, Western Australia, near the town of Northam as shown in figure 1. The town of Northam is only 3 km or so away. The facility is situated on the little-used Northam Army Base.

**1.5 Getting there.** People converging on Yongah Hill 2013 will be traveling by a variety of means. There will be chartered buses and coaches from Perth. Some people may take their own vehicles from Perth, some may even use the Avonlink or Prospector train service to Northam. For up to date details on transport options and how to book a seat on one of the buses, consult the convergence website, <http://refugee-rights.net/converge>.

**1.6 The refugees.** Most of the refugees at Yongah Hill are Tamils from Sri Lanka and Hazaras from Pakistan and Afghanistan. It appears that Yongah Hill is not being used for long term detention. However an increasing proportion of people are in a limbo status where their processing has not even begun and they are vulnerable to being sent to Nauru or Manus Island.

*The refugees know that we are coming and they know why. This visit will be welcomed and should bring them some hope. To quote a former refugee detained at Woomera, “Without hope you have nothing”.*

We should understand that the refugees are extremely vulnerable to being singled out and persecuted for participation in any sort of protest. Therefore we can not expect and should not encourage those on the inside to take risks with their safety or future. It is we on the outside who have some freedom and legal protections that enable us to protest or take risks.

At the same time many people in detention are courageous, politically aware and have a great deal of initiative. They are survivors who have saved themselves from often terrible circumstances. We should respect this and not patronise them by thinking of people in detention as helpless victims or as being unable to make their own informed decisions.

## 2. Transport

**2.1 Travel schedule and costs.** There will be buses from Perth going up to Yongah Hill. To book any transport or accommodation you should use the website <http://refugee-rights.net/converge>. Most people who are intending to attend the whole weekend event will be traveling to Yongah Hill on the Friday morning and returning Sunday afternoon. There also will be bus transport for those who are making a day trip on the Saturday. Up to date details of travel arrangements can be found at <http://refugee-rights.net/converge>.

While efforts have been made to keep the costs down and to raise funds in support of this event a contribution for transport is requested. Costs for the whole weekend option are \$25/\$40/\$100, concession/standart/solidarity and \$15/\$25/\$50 for the one-day option. Details of how to pay can be found at <http://refugee-rights.net/converge>. If you want to come but would have some difficulty in affording these prices, then talk to us about it. There should be some sponsored and discounted places available. Alternatively we'd be happy to accept payment as and when you can afford it.

***We don't want financial constraints to prevent anyone from being able to attend. Your participation is more important than us having to raise a few extra dollars to cover costs.***

**2.2 Travel guidelines.** The journey from Perth to Yongah Hill is only about two hours by bus, and a bit less if traveling by car. If you care coming by bus pack as you would for a domestic flight. You can take hand luggage on the bus, but your main luggage will be going up separately. If you have organised your own accommodation and are coming by bus, then we will have to make ad hoc arrangements to get you and your luggage to your accommodation.

If you are coming by private vehicle phone the convergence information line on 0405 674 562 before you get to Yongah Hill. A convenient place to stop and do this is the Bakers Hill pie shop at Bakers Hill, some 20 km before Northam on the Great Eastern Highway. We will be able to provide some last-minute advice on where to go and park.

**2.3 Local transport.** There will be commuter vehicles available for short-range transport over the weekend. In addition to this there is the local taxi service, 352 Fitzgerald St Northam, 96222936.



## 3. Geography and Weather

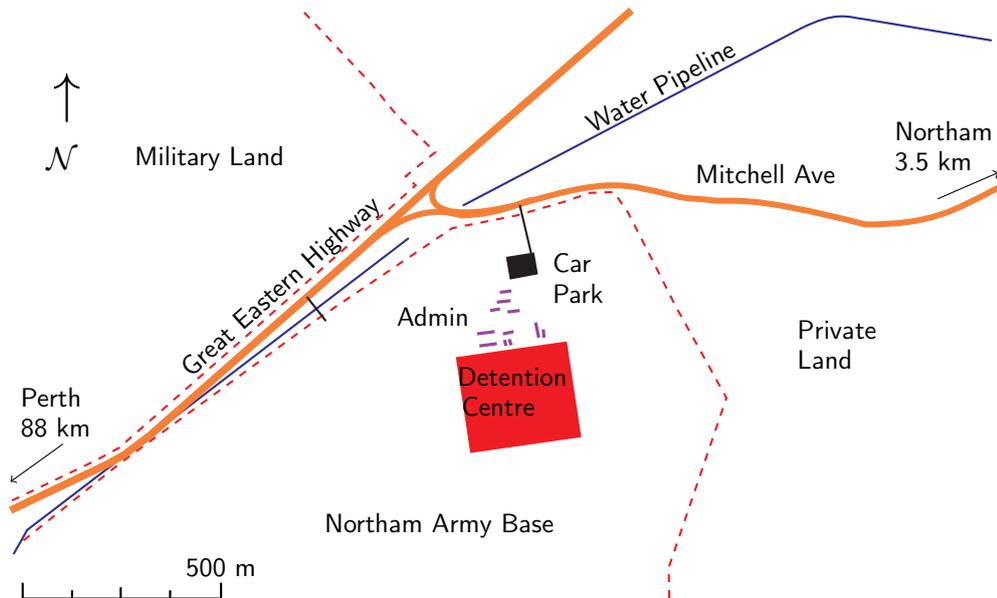


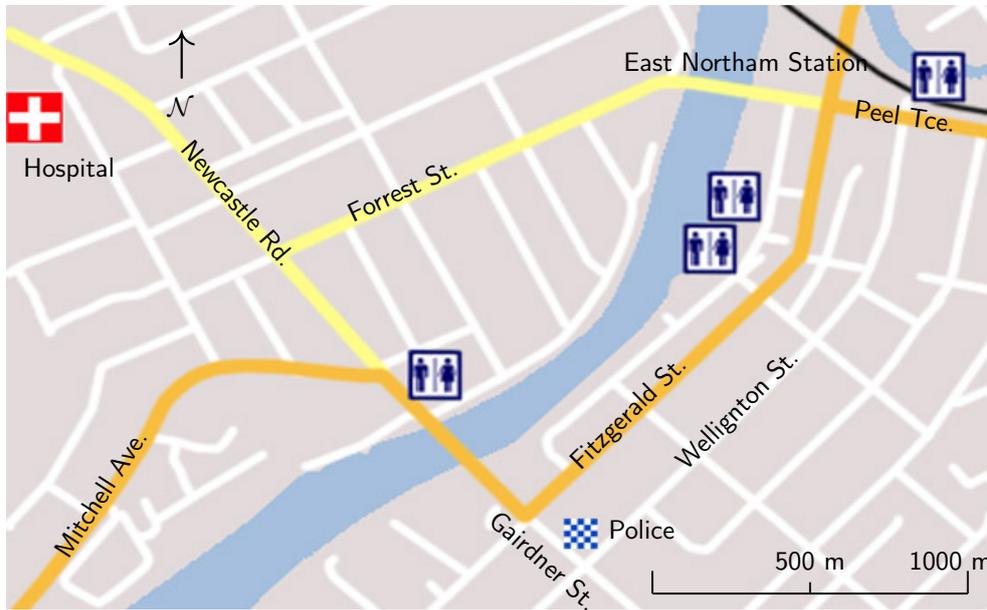
Figure 1: Yongah Hill, Northam Army base and surrounds. Base lands extend beyond the limit of the map.

**3.1 Yongah Hill Detention Centre.** *Yongah Hill detention centre is located on the Northam Army Base about 4 km west of Northam as shown in figure 1. This is about 90 km east of Perth along the Great Eastern Highway.*

The centre is sited a couple of hundred meters within the boundaries of the Northam Army Base. The main entrance to the detention centre and carpark is from Mitchell Ave. It is essentially a maximum security prison. It has extensive surveillance cameras, a double perimeter fence with the inner fence electrified, as well as secure internal compounds and mesh covered-in walkways. Movement within the centre is controlled by swipe-card access so the the refugees, who have their own cards, only have access and communication to other parts of the centre by permission of the centre management, or under escort by guards.

**3.2 Northam Army Base.** Northam Army Base is a little used facility and has only a few permanent staff such as caretakers. These days it is mainly used as a training facility for the Army Reserve. The base includes areas both north and south

of the Great Eastern Highway in figure 1. The south side of the base has most of the buildings. The northern side has a firing range and a large area for manoeuvres. The base perimeter fences are shown in figure 1 with the entrance off the Great Eastern Highway.



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Figure 2: Northam, hospital, toilets, police and train station.

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**3.3 Northam.** Northam is a small town located on the Avon river. It does have most amenities and facilities. Most outlets are closed after midday or early afternoon on a Saturday. Figure 2 shows the location of public toilets, several of which are 24 hour. The main shopping outlets are along the main roads marked, with the exception of Mitchell Ave.

**3.4 Terrain.** Northam Army Base is located on the lip of the Avon Valley, so the area around the base is hilly and predominantly farmland. Where there is vegetation it is low woodland, quite sparse in places, with a thin undergrowth. There is no standing water on or around the base. The ground around the base is stony and sandy.

**3.5 Weather conditions.** The weather in autumn is very congenial. The maximum temperatures can be expected to be less than  $31^{\circ}\text{C}$ , with overnight minima a comfortable  $10\text{--}15^{\circ}\text{C}$ . The average number of wet days in April is only one or two, so the chances for any rain over the convergence weekend are small.

## 4. Organising

**4.1 How these events are organised.** Events such as Yongah Hill 2013 have been called convergences and are inspired by events such as ‘Woomera 2002, festival of freedoms’, ‘Baxter 2003’ and ‘Baxter 2005’ among others.

*Generally these types of events have been organised in highly organic and non-heirarchical ways.*

This is both for philosophical and practical reasons. Foremost it is politically impractical and indeed widely unacceptable to get a wide variety of individuals and groups to submit to some centralised organising authority. Decentralised and non-heirarchical structures also have the benefit of being eternally confusing and mysterious to the police and DIAC. It is a continual source of amusement for activists to see police struggling with the idea, and indeed refusing to believe, that noone is ‘in charge’.

This model of organising does not preclude ‘top down’ organised groups from participating. It’s just that their internal structures of decision making and authority only apply internally to those groups. The groups themselves relate to the rest of the groups and individuals participating through the non-heirarchical model.

One concept that has been used successfully before is that of ‘affinity groups’. At Yongah Hill we may decide or agree to use a model along these lines.

**4.2 Affinity groups.** Affinity groups are merely a way of organising in a decentralised and non-heirarchical manner. For events such as Yongah Hill 2013, there are some very obvious things that need organising. People interested in these can spontaneously come together via online organising forums, or other means, and collaborate on projects of mutual interest under the label ‘affinity group’. In addition to this there are numerous sorts and styles of actions that may be contemplated. These can also be organised by people of similar interests forming affinity groups.

*So an affinity group is simply a group of people who have some affinity with each other on the basis of political ideas, practical objectives, tasks, tactics, perspective or point of view.*

Affinity groups may be formed to be synonymous with existing organisations such as activist groups, NGOs or political organisations. They may also be formed on an ad-hoc basis, purely serving the purpose of organising for this one event.

Some examples from previous convergences of groups and the functions that they performed are;

- Food Not Bombs. Providing meals for a donation
- First Aid
- Limp Wrists Against Fascism. Gay activists who protested in fabulous outfits
- Syndicate of Initiative. Technologically savvy activists who sought to use various technologies to amplify the impact of their presence.

Many standing political or activists organisations have functioned as affinity groups for their members attending past convergence. So at Yongah Hill we may see socialist groups, refugee activists groups, social justice groups, unions, religious groups and other ad-hoc groups.

**4.3 Making decisions on the ground.** The only realistic way to make decisions on the ground is through meetings. While the general outline for the weekend program will have been sketched out, it's quite likely that meetings will be required if things change or evolve from what was anticipated.

*These meetings can also serve as ways to keep everyone informed about what is going on. It is likely that a number will be scheduled throughout the weekend, probably when people will naturally be congregating, such as close to meal times.*

There is no way to enforce any decisions. All we can do is make the mutual commitment to respect each other and try to not compromise each other and the various activities and actions that are planned. We should endeavour to be circumspect. We have to accept that we won't always agree on what's best to do. In the bigger picture specific details rarely matter. If you are uncomfortable with someone's chant, it probably does not really matter. If you are impatient because someone does not want to stand face-to-face with a line of police, it's not the end of the campaign.

*Within the bounds of being generally nonviolent, We have to be willing to accept a diversity of tactics and approaches. We have to find ways to pull in approximately the same direction and avoid working against each other.*

## 5. Accommodation

**5.1 Options.** The intention is to accommodate everyone suitably close to the detention center. There are several options available including commercial campsites and an offer from a local landholder to camp. However, final arrangements may not be determined until late in the piece and we may have to accommodate changes on short notice. There are sufficient contingency plans in place to ensure that we will be able to stay somewhere. If needs be, we may have a discussion on the buses to choose between options.

*People staying for the whole weekend should be prepared to camp for two nights.*

The Camping affinity group will make sure that there are;

- ablution facilities
- meals
- electrical power
- tables
- ample cold water
- common shade and shelter spaces
- camp kitchen
- garbage facilities.

Some people may choose to organise their own accommodation. There are a number of B&Bs, hotels and caravan parks in Northam or within 20 to 30 kilometers of the detention centre.

**5.2 Fires.** It would be preferable to not light fires for any purpose. Fires are not needed and things will be safer without them. In recent months there has been a multiple arson incident in local bushlands and properties, including land immediately opposite the detention centre. This may have served to heighten fire anxieties with the local authorities.

**5.3 Food.** A communal kitchen will be operating and providing a vegan/vegetarian breakfast, lunch and dinner over the weekend. A nominal donation to cover the cost may be requested depending on how successful the fund raising efforts are. You should bring your own simple eating utensils, cup, bowl, spoon or fork.

Where at all possible potential allergenic foods will be avoided. If you have food allergies, please check with the cooks on site to make sure that the food being prepared is not an issue with you. They may be able to accommodate your special needs anyway.

**5.4 Hygiene and sanitation.** We may be camping without established ablution facilities. If so we may be digging our own toilets. At the very least there will be sufficient water provided to allow each person to sponge bath themselves morning and evening. Hand-washing stations will be provided.

*There are public toilets marked in figure 2. People will be able to commute into Northam if this is required.*

**5.5 What to bring.** Those who are staying for the whole weekend are scheduled to stay for two nights at a suitable campsite or caravan park, see section 5.1. Rain is not expected, see section 3.5. You need to provide your own;

- Sleeping gear
- Personal hygiene items
- Personal eating utensils
- Personal water bottle

A tent should not be strictly necessary. It is strongly suggested that you bring;

- sun glasses
- hat
- sturdy shoes
- light full-length pants
- light long-sleeve shirt
- mobile phone
- flashlight.

For those who value their comfort you could consider bringing a folding chair. There will be a limited amount of camping equipment available for loan to those who are unable to provide their own.

Most of your gear other than hand luggage will be going up separately to the buses. Plan your luggage arrangements as you would for a domestic flight, hand luggage to go with you.

## 6. Program

**6.1 Program outline.** What happens at Yongah Hill will be defined by those that go and the discussions that are had in the lead-up to Yongah Hill, and quite possibly at Yongah Hill. Some actions and events that have already been considered or organised are;

- evening candlelight vigil
- conventional rally-style protest
- kite flying
- workshops and educational sessions on various topics, the refugee experience, refugee policy, protest tactics, political analysis
- interpretive dance performance.

You should consult the website <http://refugee-rights.net/converge> for more up-to-date and detailed announcements of various actions and activities. If you have planned an action or activity please consider submitting it to the website so that others can participate, help organise it, or fine tune their own actions to complement or at least not conflict with yours.

**6.2 Principles for action.** *It is extremely likely that most, if not effectively all people who go to Yongah Hill will support general nonviolence principles as a common ground for cooperating.*

For some a commitment to nonviolence principles will be ideological or even spiritual. Others may have tactical, strategic or political reasons for subscribing to them.

There may be a variety of interpretations as to what constitutes nonviolence. If we stick to a common sense, everyday definition then we will be able to know what we are collectively committing to. The authors of this handbook suggest that some things that would be inconsistent with a commonsense definition of nonviolence would be;

- any action that may predictably cause or is intended to cause physical harm to another person
- any action that intentionally causes emotional or psychological harm to another person.

Some people have already declared that they are unwilling to do anything that could lead to an arrest. Whatever we do, we should always keep in mind why we are there and plan our actions thoughtfully to be consistent with these agendas. Wherever possible we should try to avoid cutting across the actions and activities of others present. At the same time we must accept that people have their own agency and are responsible for their own actions.

***We can only conduct ourselves having regard for the predictable consequences of our actions on others. We should be at Yongah Hill because we want to participate in and contribute to an important social justice campaign, not because we want to amuse ourselves or impress our peers.***

**6.3 Filming and photographing.** There will be who want to film and photograph. If you don't want to be filmed or photographed, ask the relevant person to leave you out of the frame or consider wearing something to obscure your identity.

***If you are filming or photographing please be aware that there are a number of legitimate reasons for not wanting to be filmed or photographed.***

Some people may simply not want their presence at Yongah Hill to become known to family or colleagues. There may be refugees present who don't want DIAC to know that they have attended a protest for fear of consequences to outstanding migration cases. We know that DIAC and Serco peruse the websites that contain protest content.

There are sometimes objections to the filming, photographing or sound recording in meetings. We know that the home governments of some nationalities collect information on their citizens' activities at events in Australia. Relatives back home country may be put at risk because of this.

In addition to these issues, filming and photographing can be provocative to some police.

***It is not illegal to film in public and you can assert the right to do so. However the police do have the power to confiscate 'potential evidence' and it's probably obstructing or hindering police to refuse to hand over that potential evidence.***

One tactic that has been employed is to hand-off, email or otherwise upload material before police can confiscate it. If they do confiscate anything you can ask for a receipt.

Finally, there is usually a plethora of filming and photographing going on. Sometimes there are more people filming actions than actually participating in them.

***Unless you know that there is a useful purpose for filming and photographing, please consider focusing your energies more on participation than observation!***

## 7. Safety

**7.1 First aid.** There will be several qualified first-aid practitioners with us and a well equipped first-aid station. First-aid volunteers will make themselves known by wearing first-aid armbands. *The first aid crew will respond to calls on 0405 673 480. You are advised to put this in your phone.*

**7.2 Personal safety.** The camp or accommodation site and the whole weekend should be a safe place for all. We must acknowledge that inappropriate sexual and criminal behaviour towards others occurs across all strata of society, and this does unfortunately include politically or socially progressive constituencies.

*It is up to us all to refuse to accept, tolerate, condone, participate in or perpetrate unacceptable behaviour, sexual or otherwise.*

A personal safety risk can be presented by the police, particularly for inexperienced people who may not understand or appreciate when a situation is beginning to escalate, or understand what escalates things with police. Section 9.1 discusses some of these issues.

**7.3 Children.** Children have often been present at convergences in the past. People who may be taking children may be organising shared childcare arrangements at the convergence so that parents can participate more actively than they otherwise might be able to.

**7.4 Footware.** Yongah Hill is in the midst of agricultural land. However, as always when in rural or remote areas you should wear closed footware with socks that go above the ankle. Thongs, flip-flops, jandals or sandals are not appropriate.

**7.5 Fauna.** The main hazard that you are likely to encounter is ants. There are some local species that are able to give quite a nip. Insect repellent on shoes could be a good strategy to supplement being careful where you step. Watch out for ant nests.

In the south-west of WA there are some well known poisonous snakes and spiders, such as the dugite and redback respectively. The risks presented by these species is generally greatly exaggerated in the public consciousness. It is extremely rare for people to get bitten and even more rare for there to be significant medical issues from bites.

A simple precaution is to check your shoes before you put them on in the morning, just to make sure that nothing has taken up residence in them overnight. Also be cautious about

uncovering potential hiding places for snakes and spiders such as under logs. April is far from the peak season for snakes and they will generally do their best to keep away from crowds of noisy humans.

**7.6 Other homosapiens.** We do know that there is some hostile local opinion towards refugees and protesters, just as there is in the general population. We know that there are local sympathisers as well. There are no indications of any organised, hostile response to our presence at Yongah Hill.

Like most country towns there is likely to be an element of parochialism. It would be common sense to conduct ourselves in a manner sensitive to this and not increase the low chances of getting into arguments or conflict with locals.

**7.7 Drugs and alcohol.** *It is suggested that we will all be safer if there are no illegal drugs present or consumed over the weekend of Yongah Hill 2013.*

Illegal drugs can be problematic in their own right, but even commonly used and fairly innocuous ones like marijuana do afford the police additional opportunities to justify searches, arrests and generally be a nuisance.

***Police in WA have rather extensive stop and search powers. These powers make it risky to possess illegal drugs.***

Likewise limited or even no consumption of alcohol would be preferable. Alcohol can be a very antisocial drug so if you do wish to drink, please be responsible and respectful in how you go about it.

Smokers please be considerate of nonsmokers and the direction of the wind. Please be fastidious with disposing of cigarette butts and the fire risk that they can present.

## 8. Media and Communications

**8.1 Enquiries and contacts.** Potential attendees wishing to make enquiries prior to the weekend of the convergence can do so using [yongahhill2013@gmail.com](mailto:yongahhill2013@gmail.com) or via <http://refugee-rights.net/converge>. During the weekend if participants need assistance, advice or up-to-date information, call 0405 674 562.

Media enquiries should be directed to [yongahhill2013@gmail.com](mailto:yongahhill2013@gmail.com), 0417 904 329 or the website <http://refugee-rights.net/converge> at any time prior to or during the convergence.

Enquiry	Phone	email
General, prior to the event		<a href="mailto:yongahhill2013@gmail.com">yongahhill2013@gmail.com</a>
Media, at any time	0417 904 329	<a href="mailto:yongahhill2013@gmail.com">yongahhill2013@gmail.com</a>
Participant information and advice	0405 674 562	
Convergence first aid	0405 673 480	

Table 8.1: Contact and information details

**8.2 Commercial media.** It is highly likely that commercial media will be present at Yongah Hill, inevitably some will have a predefined agenda. This will range from looking for any excuse to portray us and the issue in a negative light to being sympathetic to our position.

Most people would probably agree that we should not allow the media and their potential coverage to completely define or dictate our actions. Nevertheless we should consider media response when planning and taking action as one the factors informing those actions.

We should not be afraid of being criticized for our actions per se. Our political opponents will always criticize us no matter what we do. However we should consider whether or not our actions make it unnecessarily easy for our opponents to attack us.

**8.3 Our own media.** The media and communications affinity group will have internet connectivity and be providing a media and communications facility. We can therefore do quite a bit of our own media, with uploads, blogging, emails, social networking and radio interviews. This can be helpful in allowing us to influence the message that comes across to the broader public. This is especially the case when we have the best material

and are selective about which journalists to give it to.

**8.4 SMS alert system.** *We will have the ability to send broadcast SMS messages. You are encouraged to register your mobile phone number for this service at the website <http://refugee-rights.net/converge>.*

This will be very helpful in disseminating information widely and efficiently among the attendees at Yongah Hill.

Some messages may be as mundane as 'dinner is served' or 'The bus is leaving in 5 minutes'. Others may be to notify people of sudden changes or developments. Your number will not be sent on to any third party.

**8.5 Network coverage.** Northam is serviced by the three physical networks owned by Telstra, Optus and Vodafone. Almost all other providers are resellers from these networks. Vodafone has the least reliable coverage.

## 9. Legal

In this section some of the legal technicalities of our presence at Yongah Hill and the relevant authorities and bureaucracies are discussed. Some details of what to expect from the authorities are given.

*You need not be intimidated or frightened by this information about police powers and possible offenses. Information and knowledge are what help you understand potential risks as and when they emerge, keep safe and make informed decisions.*

**9.1 The authorities.** There are multiple agencies that have a stake in the enforcement of various laws and regulations with regards to the Yongah Hill detention centre and surrounds. These are;

- The Australian Army and Department of Defence
- The Department of Immigration and Citizenship (DIAC)
- The Australian Federal Police (AFP)
- The Western Australia Police (WAPOL)
- Serco
- The Shire of Northam

**Army and DoD** The Army and the Department of Defence (DoD) will have no direct role in operational matters.

**DIAC** It's very likely that DIAC will be anxious to prevent any contact of any sort between protesters and refugees, even visual contact. They may stipulate this to Serco and WAPOL. They will mount their own propaganda effort and we can expect the much loathed Sandi Logan (DIAC National Communications Manager) to be making comment in the mainstream media and on social media.

**Australian Federal Police** The AFP will be 'in charge' at Yongah Hill. They will be relying on the Western Australia Police to provide most of the police officers for the weekend. We are not aware of any reason to expect an unusually hostile or over zealous attitude from the AFP.

**Western Australia Police** The WA Police are the main authority that we will encounter at Yongah Hill.

***We cannot emphasize enough that people inexperienced in events and protests such as Yongah Hill 2013 should not take this information as a reason to be frightened or intimidated. Use it to learn how to participate in protests and actions in a way that is mindful and deliberate with respect to any risks and consequences.***

For the purpose of understanding how police may respond to us we can broadly separate police behaviour into two categories. These are the self-initiated response of individual officers and the command response from the police command structure including local commanders on the day.

The command response will define the orders and guidelines that 'front line' police officers should follow in interacting with us. This set of directions and parameters could include things like 'arrest people if they trespass here' and 'lets not escalate tensions by arresting people for trivial transgressions like jaywalking'.

***At refugee rights actions in Western Australia over recent years, typically the command response is at least approximately proportional to the situation.***

We should fully expect that the police will attempt to prevent any trespass on military land. However, since there is limited space on the periphery of the army base for conducting protests the police may designate an area within the centre car park or other suitable place in the interests of road safety.

Even if the command response is measured and proportional there is always the chance that the self initiated response of an individual officer will step outside these guidelines. Maybe an officer is having a bad day, is inexperienced, does not like our politics or is simply a misanthrope. We should all be alert to this possibility and consider taking steps to avoid escalating the situation if we encounter such an officer.

We can expect to be filmed by the WA police. This is more along the lines of a low-level intimidation tactic rather than for any forensic purposes. This is generally of minimal concern to most protesters.

It would be typical for the State Security Intelligence Group (SSIG) to pay attention to this protest. It would be no surprise for our accommodation or camp site to be under some observation in the evenings by the SSIG, other members of WAPOL or the Federal Police. We don't really know why they are inclined to do this, perhaps they think that they are guarding against a surprise attack, who knows? Again this is generally of minimal concern to most people who participate in convergences.

The level of observation that we may be subject to increases the argument for refraining from any unnecessary or technically illegal activities, such as drug possession or use, even in the camp/accommodation site.

**Serco** Serco is the contractor who runs the detention centre. It's likely that Serco will attempt to prevent any contact between protesters and refugees, even visual contact. This agenda could merely result in Serco offering incentives or trying to persuade the refugees from interacting with us, even if this interaction is nothing more than being outside and seeing or hearing us. However it could easily lead to the use coercive or oppressive tactics. Serco staff have the authority to use force to detain and control the refugees in detention, including the use of riot gear and tear-gas. They have no authority to use any means of coercion or force against persons not in immigration detention.

Serco subcontracts some security functions to other general security providers, so we may see security staff from companies such as MSS and Chubb among others. These would typically be in roles not directly interacting with refugees, such as staffing the boom gate to the car park or doing perimeter patrols.

**Shire of Northam** The land around Yongah Hill lays within the Shire of Northam. Therefore typical local council laws will apply. It seems unlikely that shire rangers will involve themselves with any aspects of managing or policing our presence and activities at Yongah Hill.

**9.2 Possible offences.** This section discusses the some of the laws people may have a poor awareness of. This information should not be considered as legal advice. *This section is about understanding and knowing how to manage the limited risks and participate without over- or under-estimating them.*

**Refusing to give name** In WA a police officer can demand a person provide their name, address or date of birth under a broad range of circumstances.

*While it is not always technically compulsory to comply, police expect compliance in identity requests and refusal would very likely escalate the situation. Persistent refusal will likely result in an arrest.*

This is a common practise even when police have not formed any suspicion of wrongdoing and have no intention to make an arrest.

**Move-on notices** A WA police officer has the power to issue a 'move-on' notice when they have a reasonable suspicion that a person in a public place has, or is about to commit an offence. This is one power that the police may be inclined to misuse or use incorrectly. The legality using move-on notices to prevent or break up a protest has never been tested in court as far as we know.

*Defying an illegitimate move-on order would likely result in an arrest or summons to face charges of breaching a move-on notice.*

These notices may specify geographic areas from which the recipient of the notice may be barred for periods of up to 24 hours.

**Disobeying a lawful direction** WAPOL officers may issue lawful directions and it is an offence to disobey these. Any direction that an officer has a reasonable reason for giving may be considered a lawful direction. So directions made in the interests of safety, such as ‘Don’t stand on the road’ could be an example of a lawful direction.

**Injuring police** Western Australia has mandatory jail terms for people convicted of harming police officers. It goes without saying that getting into fights with police is generally a bad idea. Politically it makes it very easy for our opponents to criticize us and muffle our message. Internally, amongst protesters and sympathisers, gratuitous conflict with police is likely to aggravate or incite divisions. Aside from all this the personal consequences can be severe.

**Hindering police** It is an offense to hinder or obstruct police in the performance of their duties.

*A person must do something that actually acts to prevent or delay the police from performing their duties. This extends to all public officers or persons assisting public officers.*

Previously WA police have publicly admitted that merely arguing or disagreeing with police is not sufficient to sustain a charge of hindering police.

**9.3 Police stop and search powers.** *Police in Western Australia have rather extensive stop and search powers.*

In general they only need to hold a reasonable suspicion that a person is in possession of something related to a potential or committed offence in order to be able to search them. If a place has been designated by a senior officer as a place where extended powers apply, they can stop and search without any reason. Generally the extended stop and search powers are used at events or in entertainment precincts to search for drugs or weapons.

While there may be some specific grounds and technicalities on which these powers can be limited or challenged, they are rather narrow. Resisting a search would probably escalate the situation and likely lead to an arrest.

**9.4 Arrests.** *There is no reason to suspect that arrests are likely.*

However, nobody can say that arrests are not possible, so it’s good to know the ins and outs of it.

*If you are arrested it is best not to say anything, other than give your name and address as required.*

One police interview tactic that they are trained in is to simply ask questions again and again. It sounds stupid, but this is actually a relatively effective technique to get people to admit to something or divulge information. Be alert to this, even in casual non-custodial situations. If you have to give an answer a short noncommittal phrase such as ‘I politely

decline to answer at this time' can be useful.

Before a formal interview, the police must advise you of your rights, you do not have to sign anything in the way of statements or admissions and it is often best not to do so. If you are in custody you can ask to make a private telephone call to a friend, relative or lawyer. However, this is not a legal right. If you are under 18 then an adult who is independent from the police must be present for any formal interview. In all conversations with police, there is no such things as 'off the record'. Anything you say at any time can be used against you.

In the event that anyone is arrested, it would be typical for there to be a support effort mounted. That is, someone seeking to find out where the arrestee is being held, on what charge and when they might get bail. There will be an effort to get the arrestee legal advice and representation in any interview.

***If you are arrested you won't be abandoned.***

**9.5 Conclusion.** The general point to take from all this is that police in WA have ample powers to unreasonably prevent a protest action or make arrests for spurious reasons, if this takes their fancy.

It should be noted that they don't automatically object to protests. They can even be accommodating sometimes. Sensible police commanders will brief their troops not to escalate tensions with arrests for trivial or technical offences that are not actually causing real problems. As for how they will react at Yongah Hill, we'll just have to wait and see. At this point we have no reason to suspect that the police approach will not be balanced and proportional to our actions and behaviour.

Armed with the information in this section, people attending Yongah Hill 2013 should be able to make informed choices and avoid or minimise any risks in dealing with the police.

***For us it's about knowing how to protest in a way that makes our point and makes it more trouble for the police to prevent the protest than to just tolerate it. It's about preferring to not antagonize police unless there is a good tactical or political reason for doing so. It's about not getting into trouble just because we did not fully understand or appreciate the risks.***



# 10. Emergencies

**10.1 Emergency phone numbers.** Emergency numbers are listed in table 10.1. The emergency number 000 will work with mobiles if there is reception for your carrier. However, the number 012 is included and will work with any carrier that has reception even if you are not with that carrier and regardless of you having no credit or your phone being blocked.

Service	Phone	Address
Convergence first aid	0405 673 480	
Convergence info and advice	0405 674 562	
Ambulance (emergency)	000 or 012 (mobile)	
Police (emergency)	000 or 012 (mobile)	
Fire (emergency)	000 or 012 (mobile)	
Northam Police	9622 4260	8 Gairdner St
Northam Hospital	9690 1300	Robinson Street
Northam Volunteer Fire and Rescue	9622 1071	43 Wellington Street

Table 10.1: Emergency services

**10.2 First aid.** There will be several qualified first-aid practitioners with us and a well equipped first-aid station. First-aid volunteers will make themselves known by wearing first-aid armbands. ***The first aid crew will respond to calls on 0405 673 480. You are advised to put this in your phone.***

