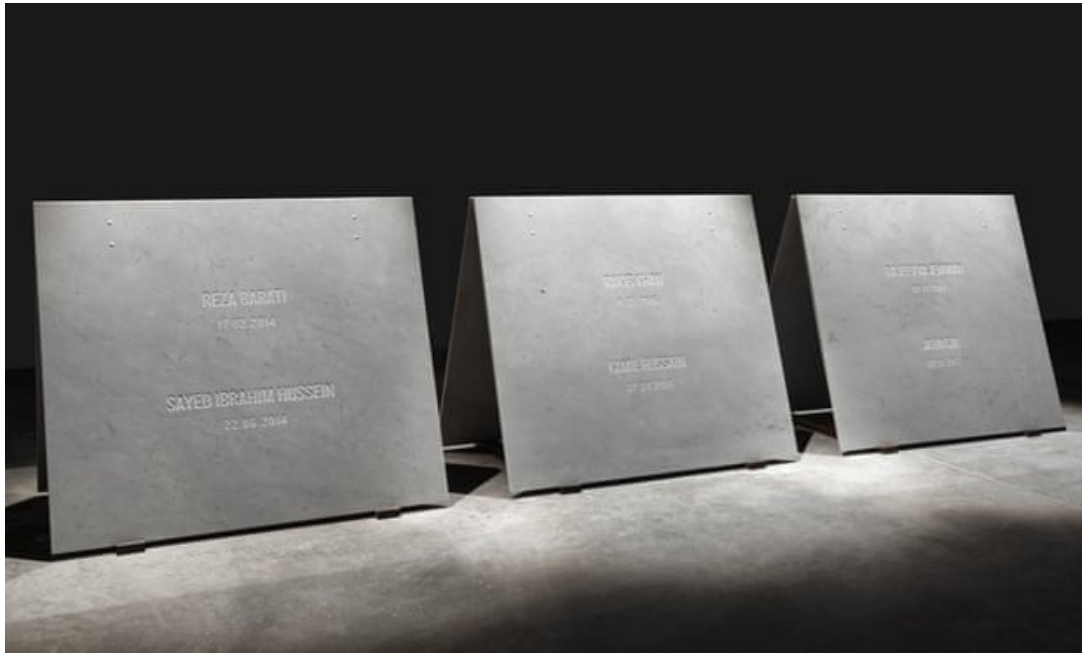


# Marble tombstones at Labor conference reminder of ALP's role in offshore detention

Helen Davidson  
7 Dec 2018

**Artist Alex Seton's marble plaques bear the names of every person who has died under the bipartisan policy**



Alex Seton's artwork noting the deaths of 12 people in Australia's offshore detention system will be on display during the Labor federal conference as part of the All We Can't See exhibition. Photograph: Mark Pokorny

When Labor party members arrive at their national conference in Adelaide later this month, they will be confronted with a series of large marble tombstone-like plaques bearing the names of all the people to have died as a result of a policy the party supports.

The plaques, by artist Alex Seton, are part of the *All We Can't See* exhibition devoted to showing the horror of offshore detention, booked as part of the fringe event to Labor's annual meeting at the Adelaide Convention Centre.

The exhibition is based on the thousands of leaked internal reports from the Nauru detention centre, revealed by the Guardian in 2016.

Seton's works stand 1.5m tall in a largely unavoidable area of the venue, and bear the hand-engraved names of 12 dead men who were detained on Nauru or Manus Island.

"Each of those men died because of us, and they didn't have to," curator Arielle Gamble told Guardian Australia.

"Deaths at sea are unacceptable but so too are deaths as a result of policy, and that's what we have now."

"We want to pressure them to change policy, to have policy reform."

On the Sunday evening the travelling exhibition, *All We Can't See: illustrating the Nauru Files*, will formally open its Adelaide show, with new works added since touring Melbourne and Sydney.

"It's on the first night of the conference once the main conference has finished - we'll be hosting the exhibition and a couple of talks, and it's the night before the scheduled talk on Labor's refugee policy."

The inclusion of the exhibition has sparked consternation in the Labor party, as they work to develop their refugee policy ahead of next year's election. Recent months have seen a decisive shift in public sentiment about detaining refugees offshore.

Labor politicians have been invited to the opening night. Some have said yes. Opposition leader Bill Shorten declined his invitation the day a story about the show was printed in the Australian, Gamble said.

Others haven't yet responded.

"I'm disappointed not to have one from Ged Kearney yet, and some others," said Gamble.

Two speakers will address the opening night crowd: Dr Christine Rufener, a clinical psychologist with Medecins Sans Frontieres who has been publicly critical of conditions on Nauru since she and her team were kicked off by the Pacific island's government, and Shaun Hanns, a former employee of the department of home affairs.

Hanns has spoken of his experience with the department and publicised his assessment of Australia's "meaningless" offshore detention regime.

"His experience was that boat turnbacks are what the system relies on," said Gamble.

"This policy is responsible for major human rights abuses in our name, and it's also purposeless at this time," she said.

"We want Labor leaders to engage with the human cost of their policies to date, and to get serious about listening to evidence and reason, and develop a humane and sustainable policy for the coming election."

Around 25 paintings and photographs as well as other works will also be on display, from artists including Ben Quilty, Hoda Afshar and Blak Douglas, as well as digital works and readings from Paul Kelly, Lisa Mitchell, Kate Miller-Heidke and Benjamin Law.