

Labor for Refugees



New South Wales
www.labor4refugees.com

Convenors:

Shane Prince SC Mob: 0416 229 338

Jenny Haines Mob: 0418 634 448

Secretary:

Nizza Siano Mob: 0404 532 249

28 August 2019

Status Resolution Support Services (SRSS) – addressing the impact of cuts

The Commonwealth Government provides a meagre level of support to people seeking asylum while their status is being resolved, i.e. while it was being determined whether or not they were refugees, a lengthy process. The government has been gradually tightening the eligibility requirements for SRSS and reducing the budget for SRSS with the effect that many people are left completely without support. Some people seeking asylum are allowed to work, but finding work, and in particular safe non-exploitative work, is almost impossible for many, and others are not allowed to work anyway. For example, the Home Affairs Department website refers erroneously to 'Illegal' maritime arrivals and sets out their options: essentially leave or starve.ⁱ

In NSW, the Chief Executive Officer of the Asylum Seeker Centre sets out some of the consequences of the cuts:

we are seeing the impact on people , and their families on a daily basis. The demand for basic food items has increased by over 20% this year and we are now supporting 2000 people per month with basic food essentials. ...we also provide a hot meal daily and the demand has also increased. ASC is administering around \$35,000 per month in emergency relief but we are also not meeting need. A lot of people are living in garages and more are becoming the hidden homeless. We are working on increasing our Employment program as this is the only way people can survive. Though not everyone is able to work or have sufficient English to be safe in a work place.

In Victoria, the Asylum Seeker Resource Centre spelt out some of the effects they are seeing in a report published in April 2019 [Cutting the Safety Net](#).

Against this background, some State and Local Governments have stepped in to address the crisis for people seeking asylum in their area of responsibility.

Queensland

The Queensland Government has established the \$3.5 million Asylum Seeker and Refugee Assistance Program (<https://www.dlgrma.qld.gov.au/multicultural-affairs/programs-and-initiatives/asylum-seeker-refugee-assistance-program.html>) to support the needs of people seeking asylum and vulnerable refugees on temporary visas in Queensland. The program will provide case management, emergency relief packages and employment services.

Victoria

Stepping in to support asylum seekers - \$3 million in 2019/20.

Funding will be provided for services to asylum seekers living in the Victorian community, following Commonwealth Government cuts to eligibility for the Status Resolution Support Services program in 2018.

Support will be provided for those with the most acute need, and with pre-arrival experiences of trauma, torture and family loss and separation, to reduce the long-term consequences and deterioration of physical and mental health, including children and young people. Funding will go towards mental health and trauma counselling, material aid (food, clothing), health assistance and subsidised medications, housing assistance and case coordination, while their applications for asylum are being processed. This initiative contributes to the Department of Health and Human Services' Mental Health Community Support Services output.ⁱⁱ

Local Government in Western and South Western Sydney

- Cumberland Council had created a Homelessness Officer position, partly in response to the SRSS cuts. Service providers working in the homelessness and housing sector anticipate that many people who are unable to access the SRSS program will be at risk of homelessness
- Liverpool Council passed a motion to write the Prime Minister and the Minister of Home Affairs, requesting the Federal Government reverse cuts to SRSS program and to highlight the unfair impact of cuts on people who are seeking asylum

ⁱ Illegal maritime arrivals

If you already hold a [Temporary Protection visa \(TPV\)](#) or a [Safe Haven Enterprise visa \(SHEV\)](#) you must apply for another TPV or SHEV before your current TPV or SHEV expires.

If your current TPV or SHEV expires and you have not applied for a subsequent visa, you:

- will be in Australia unlawfully
- will not be able to work or study
- will not have access to Medicare or Centrelink benefits

If you are an illegal maritime arrival and did not apply for protection before 1 October 2017 you can't apply for a TPV or SHEV. You must make arrangements to [leave Australia](#). You can [leave Australia](#) at any time.

ⁱⁱ Budget Paper 3 of the State Budget (<https://s3-ap-southeast-2.amazonaws.com/budgetfiles201920.budget.vic.gov.au/2019-20+State+Budget+-+Service+Delivery.pdf>)