



MEDIA RELEASE

28 June 2018

IMMINENT HUMANITARIAN CRISIS ON SYDNEY'S STREETS

Starting 27 June 2018, the Department of Home Affairs has begun distributing letters advising people seeking asylum of the termination of their Government financial assistance, torture & trauma counselling and casework support. Thousands will be left with no income at all by the end of 2018.

Single people deemed 'work ready' will lose all government income support by the end of July and must find employment urgently, regardless of their employment history or language proficiency. From August, families with young children will lose income support, making it impossible for many to meet rental agreements.

The NSW Alliance for People Seeking Asylum (NAPSA) is united in calling for the Federal Government to reverse the cuts. NAPSA is comprised of NSW based organisations working to provide legal, casework, accommodation, medical and housing support to people seeking asylum in NSW. Its founding members are Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS) Australia, Asylum Seekers Centre, House of Welcome and Refugee Advice & Casework Service.

The Alliance's already overstretched services warn this decision will lead to a significant spike in homelessness, chronic hunger, destitution and labor exploitation in New South Wales.

"This latest change will remove all access to income support for people living in our community. Those in rental agreements will no longer have the ability to pay. It will create a humanitarian crisis in our streets. We hold grave concerns that children will be put at significant risk of harm," said Lyn Harrison, CEO, House of Welcome

Despite the collective action taken by several refugee and asylum seekers organisations to appeal against these changes, the Government is proceeding with the drastic cuts.

"This is a deliberate action designed to cause great harm. People seeking asylum are incredibly resilient but this takes away the most basic support while they're looking for work. Currently no agency, individually or collectively, has the capacity to deal with the sheer number of people who will turn to the community for basic necessities," said Frances Rush, CEO, Asylum Seekers Centre.

People facing significant barriers to employment have been informed they will also lose their support.

"Just last month, an elderly woman who is illiterate was informed her access to government support will be removed. This is cruel and callous," said Tanya Jackson-Vaughan, Executive Director, Refugee Advice and Casework Service.

"People need stability so they can go through the complex legal process of seeking asylum. When you are having to focus each day on your next meal and where your family will sleep that night, it becomes much harder to meet appointments and respond to government communication," Tanya said.



While NAPSA acknowledges the importance of allowing all people in Australia the right to work, income support whilst people look for work is crucial.

“The reality is that most people seeking asylum want to work, in order to support their families and build new lives in Australia. But finding work is hard at the best of times and will be made even harder by the fact that people are battling homelessness and hunger at the same time. If you are looking for work in Australia, the general understanding is that there should be a safety net, so you don’t end up on the streets,” Carolina Gottardo, CEO, Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS) Australia, said.

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