

BACK YOUR NEIGHBOUR

Mayoral and Councillor Taskforce
Supporting People Seeking Asylum



Our Mission

Local governments help create safety, belonging and opportunity for all, no matter where people come from.

The Mayoral and Councillor Taskforce Supporting People Seeking Asylum's **Back Your Neighbour** campaign stands for justice and compassion for our neighbours and community members, who need certainty and a chance to rebuild their lives.

Our Taskforce is made up of almost **50 local governments nationally**, representing **6 million residents** and endorsed by 90 community organisations, faith groups, unions and service providers.

Australia has long welcomed people from refugee backgrounds, whose contributions have **enriched our society both socially and economically**.

We congratulate the Australian Government on reaching the historic **milestone of one million refugee visas** granted. For 80 years, Australia's refugee program has helped shape a strong, **multicultural nation** by offering people safety and the chance to rebuild their lives.

However, there are still **several thousand individuals, families and children** seeking protection who continue to **face uncertainty** about their safety and futures.

We ask the Federal Government to show leadership with a **fair, compassionate and respectful approach** towards people seeking protection in our communities.

What we need

What are the opportunities

01

Provide a pathway to permanency for people with a long-term unresolved immigration status

There are around **800 people** (as of December 2025) living in our municipalities **who continue to face uncertainty**. Having arrived in Australia more than a decade ago through offshore processing, they still have no clear pathway to permanency. Most were **recognised as refugees** in Nauru and Papua New Guinea, and two-thirds have close family members who are Australian citizens.



The Haidari* family fled persecution in Afghanistan in 2012. During their journey, Aziz* was separated and sent to offshore processing on Manus Island, later being medically evacuated to Australia. While his wife and children are now Australian citizens, Aziz remains on a short-term bridging visa, unable to move forward with his life. He lives with trauma and depression, facing possible separation from his family despite living in Australia for 13 years.

Ending this uncertainty through a **clear and fair resolution** will help address past injustices and enable families to **move forward and rebuild their lives**. Local governments and communities are ready to support their full and successful integration into our municipalities.



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What we need

What are the opportunities

02

Provide people with a valid Bridging Visa and the opportunity to work

Most people seeking asylum in Australia work to support themselves and contribute to the community. However, several thousand people **do not have a valid Bridging Visa** even after applying, **leaving them with no work rights**. Others are not allowed to work due to a restriction on their visa. As a result, many live in poverty while others work illegally to keep food on the table.



Amrita*, a young woman from India, has lived on a Bridging Visa for 12 years. She is eager to support herself and was offered work to cook meals at a local charity. However, without work rights, Amrita has had to rely on support from various charities to survive: "The strict visa conditions of 'no work' has placed enormous stress on me, especially on my mental health."

By providing people with work rights and a valid visa in a timely manner, they can **fill essential jobs, support themselves** and **contribute their skills to the community**.

03

Expand access to health care, income support and essential services so that people can fully participate in society

Federal Government support for people seeking asylum is a basic living allowance of \$49 per day administered via the Status Resolution Support Service (SRSS). This program has been cut by 95% since 2015 and its eligibility criteria has become so restrictive that most **people who need it are excluded**.

Approximately **5,000 people seeking asylum**, including families with children, elderly and people with disabilities, **face poverty and homelessness**. Local services and Councils are stepping in to help but cannot meet the demand for support with limited resources.



Arom*, a Malay mother of five, is ineligible for SRSS and has no income while caring for a newborn with a disability. She turned to her local council for food, nappies and help with a \$2,700 water bill. This Taskforce member Council provided Arom with clothing, a supermarket voucher and helped her apply for bill relief. This is not an isolated occurrence, this Council has supported over 40 families like Arom's with \$3,300 worth of food vouchers in the past 9 months.

Forcing people into poverty undermines the efforts to resolve their immigration status. **Expanding the SRSS eligibility criteria** for those in need, means **people can live safely** and stay engaged in the immigration process, with hopeful prospects for the future.

As Australians, we pride ourselves on fairness, compassion and giving everyone a fair go. Together, let's create a fairer and more welcoming Australia. Please contact Taskforce Secretariat, Ann Ly for further information.

**Pseudonyms have been used to maintain confidentiality.*

The Mayoral and Councillor Taskforce Supporting People Seeking Asylum acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of the land and pays respect to all Elders past and present. We acknowledge all Aboriginal and or Torres Strait Islander peoples and their communities. 



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