

A Joint Catholic Statement on SRSS Income Cuts for People Seeking Asylum in Australia

The Status Resolution Support Service (SRSS) is a vital safety net for people seeking asylum in Australia. It provides basic income support, casework services, and access to torture and trauma counselling services to many women, men, and children.

Starting in late 2017, the government began excluding full-time students including many on scholarship, and those who had sent over \$1,000 overseas, including to assist vulnerable relatives in conflict zones such as Syria or Rohingya refugee camps such as in Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh.

In the last few weeks, it has become clear that the Australian government intends to reduce [access to SRSS](#) even further. The Department of Home Affairs (DHA) will reassess all 12,000 people currently receiving SRSS support payments to see if they are 'work ready.' As a result many thousands, including those with undiagnosed mental health conditions, chronic illness and families with school-aged children, could be cut off from support, with only a 7 – 10 day transition period.

Like most, people seeking asylum want to work. Many welcomed the reintroduction of work rights in 2015 after a three year ban under the previous government's [No Advantage](#) policy.

But this sudden and seemingly blanket removal of support payments will not assist people in finding work or becoming self-sufficient, but will instead push already vulnerable people such as [Shanthi and Priyan](#) into situations of greater risk and significant stress and trauma. Hundreds, if not thousands could be left hungry, homeless, and vulnerable to exploitation starting early June 2018.

Importantly, charity services, homeless services, women's refuges and other local services are already overstretched with many reporting an increase in the number of people accessing emergency relief, emergency accommodation, and foodbanks. These services will not be able to assist even more people in need of support.

Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS Australia), Jesuit Social Services and the Catholic Alliance for People Seeking Asylum (CAPSA), jointly declare that people seeking asylum:

- Be issued bridging visas with study and work rights, Medicare, and access to SRSS, including where cases are being reviewed by the court system.
- Be supported to find legal and sustainable employment through culturally appropriate, specialist employment support services.
- Be provided with income support whilst they are looking for work or studying.
- Be exempt from searching for employment, if assessed by independent healthcare professionals as unfit to work, as in standard practice across the welfare system.

What you can do to stand for people seeking asylum and change the policy:

- Call or visit your [local MP](#). [See Caritas' guide](#).
- Sign the [petition](#) calling on Malcolm Turnbull to reverse these cuts.
- Host a [Table Talk](#), [Welcome Dinner](#), or [Words That Work](#) workshop to help change community attitudes and let people know they are welcome.
- Share your own message on social media to stand for #dignitynotdestitution and #changethepolicy
- Donate to your local service provider. For an updated list, click [here](#).