

JUSTICE FOR REFUGEES

As the COVID-19 crisis continues people seeking asylum need income support just like everyone else

Federal Parliament meets tomorrow and will leave 37000 people on Bridging Visas destitute and homeless unless we can convince the Government to include them in Jobseeker payments.

We are all in this together and have only 24 hours to make it happen so please email and call politicians now about this important issue.

Background Information for letter-writers

- Given their temporary and insecure visa status, many people on Bridging Visas are not able to find secure work – in the current COVID-19 crisis most of those who did have casual work or part-time work are now unemployed
- People seeking asylum are not currently included in the income support arrangements that have been put in place as a COVID-19 crisis response
- Without income support people cannot pay their rent or feed their families and must rely on charity and the goodwill of Australians for rent, food and healthcare to survive
- Charity organisations and local community groups will be overwhelmed in the coming weeks and months due to COVID-19 economic and health impacts
- The Federal Government has rightly responded to the COVID-19 economic crisis by providing income support for people who have no income – people seeking asylum must be included.

Please note that this action is focussed on people seeking asylum – people recognised as refugees on TPVs, SHEVs and Permanent Visas are eligible for the equivalent of Job Seeker payments – as people on Bridging Visas are not eligible.

This is very important. We must make every effort to ensure that all people seeking asylum have income support.

Please

- email and phone relevant politicians. This approach is intended to generate pressure for change through the National COVID cabinet - to overturn the current 'destitution policy' favoured by Minister Dutton and PM Morrison
- email your local MP
- email the Premier of your state
- email Sally McManus - Secretary, Australian Trade Union via the [ACTU contact form](#)
- email all relevant federal Ministers including Shadow Ministers by copying all of the email addresses into the Bcc window (click on To and you will see the Bcc window)
- once you have sent the emails, you might also call the Ministers' officers (see contact numbers below).

The next page details how.

Here's a sample email for federal politicians

To:

Cc:

Bcc: senator.ruston@aph.gov.au; Josh.Frydenberg.MP@aph.gov.au; Alan.Tudge.MP@aph.gov.au; Jason.Wood.MP@aph.gov.au; David.Coleman.MP@aph.gov.au; Michelle.Landry.MP@aph.gov.au; Luke.Howarth.MP@aph.gov.au; A.Albanese.MP@aph.gov.au; Richard.Marles.MP@aph.gov.au; Chris.Bowen.MP@aph.gov.au; senator.keneally@aph.gov.au; Linda.Burney.MP@aph.gov.au; Jason.Clare.MP@aph.gov.au;

Subject: COVID-19 crisis - People seeking asylum need income support – just like everyone else.

Dear Minister

Approximately 37,000 people are currently on Bridging Visas awaiting decisions on their application for protection visas.

Many of these people have been supporting themselves in casual insecure work such as hospitality, construction, uber driving etc. and like so many others, many have recently lost this employment.

As well, some people have never been able to secure employment, while some have never had the right to work.

None of these people currently have access to Centrelink payments.

Like anyone else, people seeking asylum need basic income support so they can pay their rent and feed their families – without access to basic income individuals and families are becoming homeless and destitute. While charities are doing their best to help, the scale of this situation is beyond their capacity.

Please act decisively to ensure that these people and families have access to income support. Like us all these people are anxious about the COVID-19 risk, and we need to ensure that they can feel secure about maintaining their housing and capacity to cover essential living expenses.

No-one should be left without income support at this time - COVID-19 does not discriminate, and nor should we.

Yours sincerely,

Name

Address

Here's what to do next

- **Tweak and send your email to your local federal MP.** [Find your local MP here](#).
- **Email the Premier/First Minister in your state/territory** and encourage them to use their influence in the national COVID-19 cabinet. The states have an interest in persuading the federal government to provide income support for refugees and people seeking asylum – state governments should not be expected to fill the gap (though Victoria and Queensland did provide some funds in 2019). Social security and income support is a federal responsibility.
- **Follow your emails up with phone calls and call senior federal politicians.**

Here's a sample email for State/Territory Premiers and First Ministers

Subject: COVID-19 crisis - People seeking asylum need income support – just like everyone else.

Dear Premier * See below for a list of names and email addresses

Approximately 37,000 people are currently on Bridging Visas awaiting decisions on their application for protection visas.

Many of these people have been supporting themselves in casual insecure work such as hospitality, construction, Uber driving etc. and like so many others, many have recently lost this employment. As well, some people have never been able to secure employment, while some have never had the right to work. None of these people currently have access to Centrelink payments.

Like anyone else, people seeking asylum need basic income support so they can pay their rent and feed their families – without access to basic income individuals and families are becoming homeless and destitute. While charities are doing their best to help, the scale of this situation is beyond their capacity to cope.

Include here any examples if your community group is assisting refugees financially (please respect privacy and do not use names)

Please act decisively to ensure that these people and families have access to income support. Like us all these people are anxious about the COVID-19 risk, and we need to ensure that they can feel secure about maintaining their housing and capacity to cover essential living expenses.

No-one should be left without income support at this time - COVID-19 does not discriminate, and nor should we.

Yours sincerely,
Name
Address

State/Territory Premiers and Chief Ministers

Premier of New South Wales Hon. Gladys Berejiklian		https://www.nsw.gov.au/contact-us/contact-the-premier/
Premier of Victoria Hon. Daniel Andrews	(03) 9651 5000	daniel.andrews@parliament.vic.gov.au
Premier of Queensland Hon. Anastacia Palaszczuk	(07)3719 7000	thepremier@premiers.qld.gov.au
Premier of South Australia Hon. Steven Marshall	(08) 8429 3232	premier@sa.gov.au
Premier of Tasmania Hon. Peter Gutwein		peter.gutwein@parliament.tas.gov.au
Premier of Western Australia Hon. Mark McGowan	(08)6552-5000	wa-government@dpc.wa.gov.au
NT Chief Minister Hon. Michael Gunner	(08) 8936 5500	chief.minister@nt.gov.au
ACT Chief Minister Hon. Andrew Barr	13 22 81	barr@act.gov.au

Call these federal politicians

Federal Government Ministers

	Phone
Senator the Hon. Anne Ruston, Minister for Families and Social Services	(02) 6277 7560
The Hon Josh Frydenberg, Federal Treasurer	(02) 6277 7920
The Hon Alan Tudge, Minister for Population, Cities and Urban Infrastructure	(02) 6277 7200
The Hon Jason Wood, Assistant Minister for Customs, Community Safety and Multicultural Affairs	(02) 6277 4982
The Hon David Coleman, Minister for Immigration, Citizenship, Migrant Services and Multicultural Affairs	(02) 6277 4188
The Hon Michelle Landry, Assistant Minister for Children and Families	(02) 6277 4373
The Hon Luke Howarth, Assistant Minister for Community Housing, Homelessness and Community Services	(02) 6277 4018

Federal Opposition/Shadow Ministers

Hon Anthony Albanese, Leader of the Opposition	(02) 6277 4664
Hon Richard Marles, Deputy Leader of the Opposition	(02) 6277 4330
The Hon Chris Bowen, Shadow Treasurer	(02) 6277 4822
Senator the Hon Kristina Keneally, Shadow Minister for Home Affairs,	(02) 9891 9139
Shadow Minister for Immigration and Citizenship	
Hon Linda Burney Shadow Minister for Families and Social Services	(02) 6277 4623
Hon Jason Clare Shadow Minister for Housing and Homelessness	(02) 6277 4904

We have only 24 hours to make it happen so please email and call politicians about this important issue now.