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| Stepping in to support people seeking asylum |
| August 2019 |

## Background

People seeking asylum are one of the most vulnerable and disadvantaged groups in our community. Nearly 60 per cent of asylum seekers in Australia have been close to death, 59 per cent have been forcibly separated from family, and more than half live with post-traumatic stress disorder or major depressive disorder.

Since late 2017 the Commonwealth government has been cutting supports for people seeking asylum. As a result, it is estimated that 6000 people could be reliant on Victorian Government support to meet basic health and wellbeing needs. This includes families and people with complex physical and mental health needs who have no income or savings.

Local communities and specialist asylum seeker agencies are under strain as more and more people present in situations of extreme vulnerability and destitution.

## Budget commitment

The Victorian Government has committed $3 million in 2019 – 20 to address rising asylum seeker destitution and vulnerability. The funds will boost the capacity of specialist asylum seeker programs to deliver crisis support and engage Victorian Government services in the immediate and longer-term response. The funds have been directed to the communities where most people seeking asylum live, including Dandenong and Brimbank.

## Services funded through this budget commitment

The following essential services have been boosted through this budget commitment:

* case coordination providing a supportive point of contact for people in crisis, conducting holistic assessments of needs and strengths, and connecting people with essential services and supports
* basic needs assistance so people seeking asylum who have no income or savings can pay for essentials such as food, medication and utilities
* homelessness assistance so that people seeking asylum do not enter a situation of homelessness and can continue to manage their health and wellbeing needs and pursue employment
* employment pathways support so people seeking asylum have the best chance possible of finding sustainable and appropriate work
* mental health support including to assist with distress related to the asylum-seeking process and past trauma
* general practice in community health, especially for people who do not have a Medicare card
* legal assistance so that people can make informed decisions as they navigate the immigration legal process.

The funding will also support partnership building to ensure that Victorian health and human services can support asylum seekers in the longer term.

## For further information or to access support

For general information and support, and to be assessed for eligibility for homelessness and basic needs assistance, case coordination and employment pathways support contact:

**Red Cross Migration Support Programs**

03 03 8327 7370 **(Southeast, North)**

**Asylum Seeker Resource Centre (West)**

03 9326 6066

For specialist mental health support contact:

**Monash Health Refugee Health Service (Southeast)**

03 9792 8100 and request the Refugee Health Nurse on Triage

**Cabrini Asylum Seeker and Refugee Health Hub (North, West)**

03 8388 7874

**The Victorian Foundation for Survivors of Torture (Foundation House) (Southeast, North, West)**

03 9389 8900

For legal assistance related to a protection visa claim contact:

**Refugee Legal**

03 9413 0101 for general enquires and TPV/SHEV advice

03 9413 0100 for the Telephone Advice Line (Wednesday and Friday 10am - 2pm)

GP healthcare services being boosted through this funding can be accessed at:

**Monash Health Refugee Health Service (Southeast)**

03 9792 8100 and request the Refugee Health Nurse on Triage

**IPC Health (Brimbank)**

(03) 9219 7142

Asylum seekers can also receive free assistance from all Victorian Government funded health services, including at Community Health Services and Hospitals.

For enquiries about this budget commitment or how Victorian Government services assist people seeking asylum contact Kim van den Nouwelant, Senior Policy Officer Diversity at the Department of Health and Human Services on 03 9096 1009 or [kim.van.den.nouwelant@dhhs.vic.gov.au](mailto:kim.van.den.nouwelant@dhhs.vic.gov.au).

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