



Document Name:	People Seeking Asylum – Position Statement
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Whittlesea Community Connections (WCC) has issued this position statement to provide an overview of its commitment to people seeking asylum in accordance with the Refugee Convention.

Definitions:

Asylum Seeker

Is a person who has fled from their own country due to fear of persecution and has applied for (legal and physical) protection in another country but has not yet had their claim for protection assessed.

Under Australian law a person remains an asylum seeker until their protection ‘status’ has been determined. Under international law however, a person is a ‘refugee’ as soon as they meet the definition of refugee, whether or not their claim has been assessed.

Refugee:

Any person who owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his/her nationality and is unable, or owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail themselves of the protection of that country.

Overview of the issue:

Cultural diversity greatly enriches Australia. Our society culture and economy has and will continue to benefit from the immigration of people from around the world. Unlike migrants, however, refugees have no choice about where, when or how they re-settle in order to seek protection.

Seeking protection by coming to a country and asking for protection is commonly called ‘seeking asylum’. In Australia, ‘seeking asylum’ is often seen as being the ‘wrong’ way to come despite being protected by the Refugee Convention and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

The Australian Government asylum policies and legislation are complex and ever changing. Under the Status Resolution Support Services (SRSS) program, some Bridging Visa E holders who have complex

needs are eligible for more intensive casework support but the majority receive little assistance beyond income support (capped at 89% of Newstart or Youth Allowance).

In 2023, the Government announced that it would end the policy of temporary protection. People who already have a Temporary Protection Visa (TPV) or Safe Haven Enterprise Visa (SHEV) are able to apply for a permanent Resolution of Status (RoS) Visa. As of July 2024, 18,543 permanent visas were granted however 4,520 applicants have been and are at judicial review refused and a further 7,693 cannot be granted a permanent visa¹.

Successive government asylum policies have caused systematic discrimination against already vulnerable people, many of whom have already suffered serious trauma and abuse. To seek sanctuary from fear and oppression is a right under international law, of which, Australia is a signatory, meaning we have international humanitarian and legal obligations to accept refugees and reunite families.

Our Position:

WCC advocates that people seeking asylum should be welcomed in our community and be afforded the permanent protection they seek and have a right to. WCC advocates for people seeking asylum in the long-term to be considered refugees in legislation, policy and language with the right to healthcare, education and family reunion. WCC will work with others to contribute to local and national advocacy efforts.

To be meaningful and active community members, WCC advocates that all people seeking asylum have access now to:

- basic liveable income
- housing
- physical and mental health care
- adult English, literacy and further education
- training and skill development
- early childhood education and care
- connection to culture and development of creative abilities
- recreational activities and facilities
- specific services for vulnerable groups, such as unaccompanied women and children, elderly people, people with disabilities etc.

WCC extends a welcome to people seeking asylum living in the City of Whittlesea and will ensure services and programs are accessible regardless of funding constraints. WCC will partner with local community providers to deliver other relevant services to people seeking asylum living in Whittlesea.

¹ <https://www.refugeecouncil.org.au/fast-tracking-statistics/2/>

Related documents

Related procedures, guidelines, forms etc	
Related frameworks	Advocacy Framework
Related policies	Advocacy Policy
Relevant legislation or standards	Refugee Convention Universal Declaration of Human Rights

Document Change History

<u>Version</u>	<u>Status*</u>	<u>Comments</u>	<u>Author</u>	<u>Ratified by</u>	<u>Date Ratified</u>
V1	Draft	Initial Statement	Emma Antonetti – Equity and Impact Manager		
V2	Endorsed	Update format, edits	Sandra Natale – Quality Consultant	Board	March 2020
V3	Reviewed	Update in policy & data	Emma Antonetti – Equity and Impact GM	Board	October 2024

** Valid values for this column are: DRAFT, ENDORSED, REVIEWED (no revision)*