

Safety net - the role of government

The Idea of a universal safety net

Page one presents an argument for the government responsibilities to ensure there is a safety net for people seeking asylum. There is also an acknowledgement that in Australia today the government is failing in that. There are multiple ways, both within government and in our society generally, that people use to justify the harshness of the present policies.

If you were take part in a debtate on the issue what would be some arguments you would put for each side.

*I believe the Australian **government should** ensure that every person seeking asylum is provided with the means to live while they await the outcome of their application*

*I believe the Australian **government does not have responsibility** to ensure that every person seeking asylum is provided with the means to live while they await the outcome of their application*

Write a few sentences to explain your own thinking about the level of support that Australian society, via governments, should provide to people who have sought asylum here.

The experience of a safety net and government policy

Read the information shared by Lativ on page two and the information on SRSS at the bottom of the page. Alternatively you may know someone else's experience of SRSS.

Below is a list of some of the items that any single person might need in any week. Make a note of any others you can think of and then make an estimate of the costs of each item.

Item	Estimated cost per week
Rent	
Food	
Clothes	
Public transport	
Phone plan	
Internet plan	
Money put aside for gas, electricity or other bills	
Medical or pharmacy	
TOTAL	

3. Compare your total to the amount mentioned in the SRSS information, and then think about what would happen if the government decided a person should not receive any more help. Write about some steps they would have to take and what you would do in a similar situation.

Connecting with stories

Choose Lativ or any other person who is seeking asylum whose story you have heard. If you can, read over their story or listen to it again. Write a letter to express your response to them and their story.

OR

Write a poem to express something of your response to the stories and / or to the attitudes and policies of the Australian government and people generally.

What can I do?

Read the sections on page three about the financial implications for charities and state governments when no adequate safety net is provided by national government.

In your school there may be opportunities for you to initiate or join in actions such as prayer services, Circles of Silence or fund raising. Each one of these can help change our society's attitudes and bring about a better way.

One more way to affect change for the better, which can be used any time, is to communicate with members of parliament. This can be done through the many campaigns that are ongoing via social media platforms and websites.

For something more direct, below is a draft of a letter which you may be able to send to your local Member, the Prime Minister and / or whichever Minister is responsible for people seeking asylum. You can also of course make changes to it or compose your own letter.

You can find your local member here – <https://electorate.aec.gov.au>

The appropriate forms of address are:

Dear Prime Minister or Minister

Dear Senator or Dear Ms or Mr for members of the Legislative Assembly if they are not ministers.

To be taken seriously you need to include your postal address (even if sending via email). Snail mail is said to be more effective and for some members you will be able to send emails only through their websites.

Dear

I write in relation to the support which is needed by people seeking asylum in general and in particular while their claims are being assessed.

In the interests of humanity I believe we should end offshore processing and bring people on Nauru and Papua New Guinea to Australia. We should be treating people seeking asylum fairly, no matter how they come.

Those who are in our country awaiting assessment of their claims should have appropriate access to income and other supports and services, government funded legal advice, and a fair review according to the Refugee convention. All found to be refugees should be welcomed and supported. No one should be sent back to persecution.

I believe restricting access to support not only harms the people themselves but also places undue burdens on State governments and on those charities and communities who are active in support. The current policies do not even make economic sense and they are certainly cruel in their impacts on many people.

I further believe that the impacts of harsh treatment will be lasting into the future. It is well known that the costs of supporting people once they have become homeless, (very likely when they have no access to support) the ongoing cost in health, justice and homelessness services is much greater than that of supporting them into housing etc.

People of my generation will be the ones who have to fix the many problems that will follow.

I urge you to put in place policies that have respect for the dignity of all.

Yours sincerely,