

# Appendix E – Supporting temporary visa holders and other non-residents



🔊 Raha recently moved to Australia to live with her Australian partner. She doesn't have a working visa, but has done a few days of 'cash in hand' work. Her partner takes the money she earns to pay for rent. A few months after Raha arrives in Australia her partner becomes violent and she flees the house. Raha has no money, doesn't know anyone else in Australia, doesn't know where to get help and is frightened that if she does ask for help she will be in trouble for working without a visa. 🔊

*Each person has their own unique experience and needs. It is important to understand the intersectionality between a person's gender, race, sexual identity, culture, experiences and circumstances. Workers may refer to multiple appendices to assist their understanding, engagement and support for each person they engage.*

## Overview

In 2021, it was estimated that 20 per cent of people sleeping rough in the inner city did not have permanent residency<sup>i</sup> in Australia. People on temporary visas and other non-residents often do not seek assistance from services due to not knowing the services available, dependence on family or friends, or fear of being removed from the country. The prevalence of people on temporary visas or other non-residents experiencing homelessness is therefore thought to be under-reported.

People on temporary visas or other non-residents may be part of a culturally, linguistically, and/or religiously diverse community. For more information on supporting people from culturally, linguistically and religiously diverse communities refer to **Appendix D**.

People on temporary visas and other non-residents encounter unique challenges such as ineligibility for basic health, housing and income support services<sup>ii</sup>, which may increase their risk of homelessness.

Many of these challenges involve policies that fall under the jurisdiction of the Commonwealth Government, such as migration policies, visa status, work rights, and eligibility for income support. This may directly impact the support the NSW Government can provide including provision of temporary accommodation. People on temporary visas may be eligible, on a case-by-case basis, for some NSW Government support when fleeing domestic and family violence, impacted by a natural disaster, or under relevant refugee status.

People on temporary visas may be eligible for crisis support from specialist homelessness services (SHS) in NSW, however there are little to no long-term housing options available within SHS or social housing. The lack of options may result in the person/ family remaining in crisis, unstable and/or unsafe accommodation for extended periods.

People on temporary visas and other non-residents often have limited employment opportunities which in turn affects their ability to maintain stable accommodation. People on temporary visas or other non-residents with young dependents may experience additional barriers to employment due to the lack of affordable and accessible childcare.

These additional life stresses can impact a person's relationships, as well as their physical, mental and/or emotional health. For more information on supporting people in mental distress see **Appendix J**.

People on temporary visas or other non-resident face additional challenges in instances where domestic and family violence (DFV) is present. This may include barriers to accessing help, such as reduced awareness of services, language barriers, lack of social support or connection. For more information on supporting people who experience DFV see **Appendix L**.

Workers will not be able to identify a person's visa or residency status by their appearance or behaviour. Disclosing residency status can be traumatic and uncomfortable for many people, particularly if there is no stability or clarity on their visa status. A culturally safe interaction may enable the worker to learn more about the individual's needs.

Workers should be supportive, non-judgemental, reassuring and help the person to feel empowered throughout all interactions.

## Asylum seekers

An asylum seeker is a person looking for protection because they fear persecution, or they have experienced violence or human rights violations. A refugee is a person who asked for protection and was given refugee status from the government and therefore may be eligible for some health and social services. Not every asylum seeker becomes a refugee, but every refugee starts out as an asylum seeker<sup>iii</sup>.

People seeking asylum may wait up to 10 years for a visa outcome without work rights or a source of income<sup>iv</sup>. This may result in dependence on others and/or living in overcrowded accommodation, or rough sleeping.

Asylum seekers often experience significant hardship. When they enter Australia, they may lack the financial resources to obtain and sustain housing and are therefore at risk of experiencing homelessness. This risk can be exacerbated by racism and discrimination within the housing market, inability to work, unfamiliarity with the local community, and lack of access to safety nets available to others.

Asylum seekers are often exposed to highly traumatic events in their home country and during their migration which often results in higher incidences of poor mental and/or emotional health. A person's mental and emotional health may impact their capacity and/or create additional challenges for engagement<sup>v</sup>. For more information on supporting people with complex health conditions see **Appendix K**.

## New Zealand citizens

Australians and New Zealanders share a strong connection given the close political relationship between the two nations and the ease in which citizens can live and work across both countries.

However, in 2021, it was estimated that New Zealand citizens made up approximately 50 per cent of non-permanent residents who were sleeping rough in Inner Sydney<sup>vi</sup>. Depending on the person's visa category, New Zealand citizens may be eligible for Commonwealth assistance in the form of Medicare, family assistance payments, rent assistance and certain pensions, as well as some state housing products. However not all New Zealand citizens are entitled to the same benefits resulting in some New Zealand citizens experiencing extended periods of homelessness and disadvantage due to their visa status.

## Engagement strategy

### Things to consider before engaging:

- The worker should consider a person's culture, history, faith or spirituality, and current circumstances, as well as the impact that these may have on any interaction. Be aware that the way temporary visa holders and other non-residents were treated in their home country and when they arrived in Australia may affect their attitude and trust levels<sup>vii</sup>.
- Temporary visa holders and other non-residents may have experienced trauma from discrimination, war and/or persecution in their home country, or other forms of trauma. Workers need to be trained in and apply a trauma-informed approach when engaging.
- Ensure the worker demonstrates cultural respect. All workers should undergo appropriate cultural diversity training.
- A temporary visa holder or other non-resident may experience increased fear when approached by a worker due to their visa status, risk of deportation, or lack of knowledge of the system or services available.
- A person's cultural norms or beliefs may also influence their willingness to access support services.

- Workers should consider the number and gender of workers who approach the person to ensure cultural safety and respectful interactions.
- Temporary visa holders and other non-residents may face complex intersecting legal issues relating to domestic violence, immigration, family and child protection law, and require legal advice and representation. Workers should refer the person to appropriate legal services.
- Workers should access language services, as required, that are certified by the National Accreditation Authority for Translators and Interpreters (NAATI) to assist with any interaction. Note while NAATI Certified Practitioners are preferred, in some cases, only NAATI Recognised Practising Practitioners may be available especially for newly emerging languages where higher certification testing may not be available. The [NSW Government Language Services Guidelines](#) can assist workers to engage language services when supporting a person who does not speak English.
- Where possible, the worker should know where to access materials in languages that a person can understand if required. Some people may be illiterate in their preferred language, in which other forms of communication (e.g., visual, audio, audio-visual) may assist.
- Any person needing urgent medical treatment will not be turned away from a NSW public hospital, however NSW public hospitals are generally not funded to treat Medicare-ineligible patients from countries not covered by reciprocal agreements<sup>viii</sup>.
  - NSW Health has a specific policy *Medicare Ineligible Asylum Seekers-Provision of Specified Public Health Services (PD 2020/039)* that provides for a fee waiver for necessary health care for persons living in the community and seeking asylum.

#### Strategies for engagement:

- Introduce yourself in a friendly manner, stating your name and the agency/organisation you work for.
- Ask the person their preferred language and engage an interpreter as needed, including when obtaining consent for referrals.
- Listen to what the person requires and be aware that this may differ to what you think they may need.
- Build trust and confidence by ensuring culturally appropriate interactions.
- Be aware of non-verbal behaviours that may be interpreted negatively by various cultures (i.e. eye contact, distance between the person and the worker, hand gestures that have different meanings).
- Use plain language and keep statements clear and simple, avoiding the use of jargon or acronyms.
- Do not provide legal advice unless you are qualified to do so, instead refer to LawAccess NSW or other appropriate legal service as needed.
- Assist the person to connect to appropriate supports if they request it.

## RESOURCES

### CRISIS SUPPORT

Name	Service	Contact Details
<a href="#">Ask Izzy</a>	A website directory that connects people who are in need with nearby services such as housing, food, health care and legal services in their local area.	<b>Website:</b> <a href="https://askizzy.org.au">https://askizzy.org.au</a>
<a href="#">Link2Home</a>	A statewide telephone service providing information, assessment and referral to specialist homelessness services, temporary accommodation and other appropriate services for people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness. It is available 24 hours a day 7 days a week every day of the year.	<b>Phone:</b> 1800 152 152 <b>Website:</b> <a href="https://www.facs.nsw.gov.au/housing/help/ways/are-you-homeless">https://www.facs.nsw.gov.au/housing/help/ways/are-you-homeless</a>

## RESOURCES

OTHER SUPPORT		
Name	Service	Contact Details
<a href="#">AMES Australia</a>	Supports culturally and linguistically diverse communities by providing end-to-end settlement services including English language, vocational training, employment and accommodation services.	<b>Phone:</b> 13 AMES (13 2637) <b>Website:</b> <a href="https://www.ames.net.au">https://www.ames.net.au</a>
<a href="#">Australian Red Cross</a>	Offers a range of programs that provide help and support to refugees, people seeking asylum, people in immigration detention and other people who are vulnerable as a result of migration.	<b>Website:</b> <a href="https://www.redcross.org.au/migration">https://www.redcross.org.au/migration</a>
<a href="#">House of Welcome</a>	Provides transitional housing, case management and wraparound support in Sydney in addition to statewide advocacy.	<b>Phone:</b> (02) 9727 9290 <b>Website:</b> <a href="https://www.houseofwelcome.org.au">https://www.houseofwelcome.org.au</a>
<a href="#">International Student Hotline</a>	Phone service provided for international students who are having problems with study, safety, work or accommodation.	<b>Phone:</b> 1300 363 079 <b>Website:</b> <a href="https://www.studiesinaustralia.com/studying-in-australia/why-study-in-australia/support-services#2">https://www.studiesinaustralia.com/studying-in-australia/why-study-in-australia/support-services#2</a>
<a href="#">LawAccess NSW</a>	Provides assistance and advice on legal matters including visa applications, immigration status and family sponsorships.	<b>Phone:</b> 1300 888 529 <b>Website:</b> <a href="https://www.legalaid.nsw.gov.au">https://www.legalaid.nsw.gov.au</a>
<a href="#">Multicultural Youth Affairs Network NSW (MYAN)</a>	Providing support and expertise to young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds so that they can build the skills, knowledge and networks they need to be active citizens in NSW.	<b>Website:</b> <a href="https://myannsw.org.au">https://myannsw.org.au</a>
<a href="#">Services Australia</a>	Supports new arrivals and non-residents with one-off crisis payments, special benefits for people in severe financial need, free interpreting services and multicultural services.	<b>Phone:</b> 1800 555 660 <b>Website:</b> <a href="https://www.servicesaustralia.gov.au/refugee-servicing-network">https://www.servicesaustralia.gov.au/refugee-servicing-network</a>
SUPPORT FOR ASYLUM SEEKERS		
Name	Service	Contact Details
<a href="#">Asylum Seekers Centre</a>	Provides practical and personal support for people seeking asylum in NSW. Services include accommodation, financial relief, health care, employment assistance, education, food, material aid and recreational activities.	<b>Phone:</b> (02) 9078 1900 <b>Email:</b> <a href="mailto:intake@asylumseekerscentre.org.au">intake@asylumseekerscentre.org.au</a> <b>Website:</b> <a href="https://asylumseekerscentre.org.au">https://asylumseekerscentre.org.au</a>
<a href="#">Mental Health Community Living Supports for Refugees</a>	MH-CLSR is a unique program that aims to provide trauma-informed, recovery-oriented, culturally safe and responsive psychosocial supports to refugees and asylum seekers who are experiencing psychological distress, mental ill health and impaired functioning.	<b>Website:</b> <a href="https://www.health.nsw.gov.au/mentalhealth/services/adults/Pages/mental-health-community-living-supports-for-refugees.aspx">https://www.health.nsw.gov.au/mentalhealth/services/adults/Pages/mental-health-community-living-supports-for-refugees.aspx</a>

## RESOURCES

Name	Service	Contact Details
<a href="#">NSW Refugee Health Service</a>	Provides information on policy, resources and a range of clinical services and medical assessments for recently arrived refugees and asylum seekers.	<p><b>Phone:</b> (02) 9794 0770</p> <p><b>Email:</b> <a href="mailto:SWSLHD-RefugeeHealth@health.nsw.gov.au">SWSLHD-RefugeeHealth@health.nsw.gov.au</a></p> <p><b>Website:</b> <a href="https://www.swslhd.health.nsw.gov.au/refugee/#">https://www.swslhd.health.nsw.gov.au/refugee/#</a></p>
<a href="#">NSW Service for the Treatment and Rehabilitation of Torture and Trauma Survivors (STARTTS)</a>	Provides counselling, psychiatric assessments and education groups for refugees and asylum seekers.	<p><b>Phone:</b> (02) 9646 6700</p> <p><b>Email:</b> <a href="mailto:stts-startts@health.nsw.gov.au">stts-startts@health.nsw.gov.au</a></p> <p><b>Website:</b> <a href="https://www.startts.org.au">https://www.startts.org.au</a></p>
<a href="#">Refugee Council of Australia</a>	Directory to find services for refugees and people seeking asylum for financial, employment, housing and legal advice.	<p><b>Phone:</b> (02) 9211 9333</p> <p><b>Website:</b> <a href="https://www.refugeecouncil.org.au/services">https://www.refugeecouncil.org.au/services</a></p>
<a href="#">Settlement Services International (SSI)</a>	Provides a range of programs to support refugees, asylum seekers and people who are culturally and linguistically diverse. Programs include disability support, education, medical care and employment.	<p><b>Phone:</b> (02) 8799 6700</p> <p><b>Email:</b> <a href="mailto:info@ssi.org.au">info@ssi.org.au</a></p> <p><b>Website:</b> <a href="https://www.ssi.org.au">https://www.ssi.org.au</a></p>
<a href="#">Jesuit Refugee Service Australia</a>	Accompanies, serves, and advocates for the rights of refugees and other forcibly displaced persons. Provides emergency assistance, support services and casework. Provides community and women's spaces in Sydney.	<p><b>Phone:</b> (02) 9098 9336</p> <p><b>Email:</b> <a href="mailto:intake@jrs.org.au">intake@jrs.org.au</a></p> <p><b>Website:</b> <a href="https://aus.jrs.net/en/jesuit-refugee-service">https://aus.jrs.net/en/jesuit-refugee-service</a></p>

## SUPPORT FOR NEW ZEALAND CITIZENS

Name	Service	Contact Details
<a href="#">High Commission Services for New Zealanders</a>	Consular services are available to New Zealand citizen outside New Zealand. The embassies can provide advice with the aim of helping a person help themselves.	<p><b>Phone:</b> (02) 6270 4211</p> <p><b>Email:</b> <a href="mailto:nzhccba@bigpond.net.au">nzhccba@bigpond.net.au</a></p> <p><b>Website:</b> <a href="https://www.safetravel.govt.nz/our-services">https://www.safetravel.govt.nz/our-services</a></p>

- i Homelessness NSW, [The experience of people without Australian permanent residency accessing emergency accommodation in inner city Sydney](#), Homelessness NSW, 2021.
- ii Homelessness NSW, [Attachment G - Provide support for people without permanent residency in NSW experiencing homelessness](#), Homelessness NSW, n.d.
- iii Australian Red Cross, [Refugee and asylum seeker facts](#), Australian Red Cross website, n.d.
- iv Asylum Seeker Centre, [Who we help: seeking asylum in Australia](#), Asylum Seeker Centre website, 2023.
- v Australian Institute of Family Studies (AIFS), [Understanding the mental health and help-seeking behaviours of refugees](#), AIFS website, 2022.
- vi Homelessness NSW, [The experience of people without Australian permanent residency accessing emergency accommodation in inner city Sydney](#).
- vii NSW Refugee Health Service (RHS) and NSW Service for the Treatment and Rehabilitation of Torture and Trauma Survivors (STARTTS), [Working with refugees a guide for social workers](#), RHS and STARTTS, 2004.
- viii NSW Health, [All overseas visitors should have health cover](#), NSW Health website, 2019.