

Status Resolution Support Services (SRSS): Recent changes and their impacts on people seeking asylum in Victoria

Status Resolution Support Services (or SRSS) are offered by the Australian Government to some people seeking asylum who are living in Australia on temporary visas, while they await the resolution of their refugee status.

SRSS consists of:

- a financial payment (roughly 89 per cent of Newstart or around \$35 per day)
- access to counselling
- case work support
- subsidised medication (in some cases).

The exact provisions of SRSS vary depending on particular individual circumstances.

2018 cuts to SRSS

In 2018 the Department of Home Affairs announced that the budget for SRSS was being cut by over 60 per cent and that the eligibility criteria for the program would be changing.

As of February 2018, 13,299 people seeking asylum across Australia were receiving these services; the Department anticipated that less than 5,000 people would still be receiving the payment after these changes.

While SRSS was previously received based on financial hardship, the revised eligibility stipulates that recipients must additionally prove they meet one of the following vulnerability criteria:

- Having physical health barriers to work that are ongoing, permanent disability, or cognitive impairment
- Having mental health barriers to work, with a current diagnosis and treatment plan in place
- Being a single parent with pre-school aged children (under six), being pregnant, or being a primary carer for someone with a significant vulnerability
- Being aged 70 or over
- Experiencing a major crisis (family violence, house fire, flood, etc.).

Impacts of the changes

Since mid-2018, the Australian Government has begun exiting people from the SRSS program – so far, more than 1200 people seeking asylum have already had their services cut.

There is significant concern that cuts are leaving many of these people and their families at risk of:

- Poverty
- Homelessness
- Poor health (both mental and physical)
- Exploitative work arrangements.

At February 2018, nearly 6,000 people seeking asylum in Victoria were receiving SRSS. Many of these people and their families are already struggling with the impacts of these cuts, and these numbers are set to increase.