

MEDIA RELEASE
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Planned government cuts to support for people seeking asylum will make people living in our community homeless this winter.



VIDEO: <https://vimeo.com/267933364>

This June, some of the harshest policies affecting people seeking asylum to date will be implemented. The Federal Government has announced that from 4th June, it will begin cutting access to Status Resolution Support Services (SRSS). The Department of Home Affairs has announced its plan to remove case work, trauma counselling and financial assistance from over 7,000 people who are waiting on a government response to their request for protection.

According to Lyn Harrison, CEO of St Francis Social Services, her team at House of Welcome holds grave concern that pregnant women, families with young children and survivors of torture will be left without any form of income to pay rent, pay for medical prescriptions or even get enough food for each day.

The House of Welcome is ramping up fundraising efforts, increasing its employment programs and calling on the community for financial donations and community food drives to ensure the most basic needs can be met.

Mrs Harrison is appealing to the community to hear the human story, rather than the negative political rhetoric.

“Our aim is to keep people safe and keep people fed.

If we think about our own families and friends, we all know someone who has come from another land. Many of us know someone who has fled war, persecution or famine. Many

people seeking asylum have been living in our community for years; they have become our family, our friends, our colleagues and classmates.

We are asking the community to help us do what is right. Please help us keep people safe, keep people fed and assist adults into employment.”

SRSS support was originally set up to provide financial, case work and trauma and torture counselling services while the Government processed the refugee status of people seeking Australia’s protection. There are currently 12,000 people receiving SRSS support in Australia; 3,000 of whom reside in NSW, mostly in Sydney.

According to Mrs Harrison, the Government is systematically removing people from eligibility for support and shifting responsibility for their care onto the community.

“The changes are harsh, ill-conceived and unjust. This Federal Government decision will force people into homelessness in Sydney this winter. Service provider’s juts don’t have the resources to meet even the most basic needs of the sheer numbers of people affected.”

The House of Welcome is asking the community to consider donating or becoming involved with the House of Welcome to assist them to provide shelter, emergency food parcels, case work and financial assistance to cover medical costs for people who are seeking Australia’s protection.

“The Australian Government will force people into homelessness this winter. People will be going hungry on our streets, they will be left vulnerable to criminal exploitation. Please do what you can.” She said.

The House of Welcome is urgently calling for donations via its website: www.stfrancis.org.au/house-of-welcome or by phone: 02 9727 9290.

They also request community members let their concerns be known to their local Member of Parliament.

To donate to House of Welcome, please visit: www.stfrancis.org.au

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About House of Welcome

Since 2001, the House of Welcome has existed to welcome, shelter and empower people seeking asylum and refugees regardless of their age, gender, sexuality, nationality or religion. We provide client-centred holistic supports that nurture hope, advocate for justice and promote self-reliance, whilst acknowledging the dignity and the rights of each individual. Services provided include: Accommodation, case work, employment & financial assistance, household necessities, English lessons, community luncheons and the Welcome Feast social enterprise.

House of Welcome is a project of St Francis Social Services. Our vision is for a society in which there is full recognition of the dignity, equality, human rights and humanity of all people. We work towards this by providing services that uphold the dignity of each person by providing support and advocacy to the most disadvantaged and marginalised within our community.