

## Call for Contributions – November 2014

### The November 2014 “Living in Limbo: Asylum Seekers and Homelessness” edition of *Parity*

#### Introduction

Many asylum seekers on bridging visas living in the community who are waiting until their asylum claims are resolved have little or no access to financial support and assistance. Many are without family or community support and are as a result either homeless or at risk of homelessness. In recent years specialist homelessness services have been seeing increasing numbers of asylum seekers who have sought housing and other forms of assistance.

While there are several reasons for this situation, the main cause and reason for asylum seeker homelessness is the poverty caused by inadequate levels of financial assistance from government, (the Asylum Seeker Assistance Scheme) or in many cases, the complete absence of financial assistance due to highly restrictive eligibility criteria. This situation is reinforced by a policy that prevents many asylum seekers seeking paid employment.

In the last year their situation has been made even more problematic by delays in the processing of applications for asylum protection and a freeze on the granting of permanent visas for those recognised as genuine refugees. This creates an ongoing situation of near permanent uncertainty. In addition flagged changes that would further restrict and time-limit Visa conditions function to make the position of asylum seekers even more insecure; for example, the recent proposal to reintroduce temporary protection visas for asylum seekers.

Overwhelmingly asylum seekers in the community have to rely on the private rental market for housing. Where rental accommodation is found, it frequently becomes chronically overcrowded in response to the unaffordability and the lack of suitable options for housing for asylum seekers. What little subsidised housing is provided through community organisations is usually only made available to the most extreme cases.

An overall shortage of affordable and adequate housing in the wider community is made even worse for asylum seekers who often face the additional barriers of discrimination, language and transport difficulties, and legal difficulties because of their indeterminate status as well as challenges associated with a lack of familiarity with the private rental system.

Moreover, the asylum seeker experience of homelessness in Australia is compounded and intensified by the fact that they are already homeless, having usually fled war and persecution in their home countries. Many have already experienced levels extreme hardship, trauma and displacement difficult for the average Australian citizen to imagine.

In essence, the homelessness experienced in Australia by some categories of asylum seekers is the result of the implementation of punitive government policies that are seen as integral to its stated goal of deterring the arrival of further asylum seeker arrivals. This form of deterrence is seen as an integral part of a process of lessening the so called “pull” factors that might attract further potential asylum seekers.

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The inadequacy of government assistance and support has meant that many asylum seekers have been forced to seek support and assistance from community members, faith based charities and other non-government organisations in order to survive.

This edition of *Parity* is devoted to examining the homelessness experienced by asylum seekers and in particular the program and service responses to these manifold issues.

## A Suggested Framework for Discussion

### Section 1: Background and Introduction

1. What is the background to and history of asylum seeker homelessness in Australia? When did it become an issue for homelessness services?
2. What were some of the original responses to asylum seeker homelessness in the late 1990's and early 2000's?
3. How have these program and service responses developed since asylum seeker homelessness became an issue?

### Section 2: The Current Situation

1. What is the legislative framework governing the provision of support and assistance to asylum seekers?
2. What support and assistance is provided to asylum seekers in terms of access to income, income support and accommodation?
3. Are homeless asylum seekers entitled to the same kinds and levels of homelessness assistance as refugees and Australian citizens?
4. What are the main causes of homelessness among asylum seekers? How does this differ from the causes of homelessness for Australian citizens? What role do government policies play in causing or increasing the risk of homelessness for asylum seekers? Do government policies exacerbate difficulties of the asylum seeker experience of homelessness?
5. What are the main policy and service responses to asylum seeker homelessness?
6. What role do state governments (and some local governments) play in responding to asylum seeker homelessness?
7. Who provides the services to support and assist homeless asylum seekers and how is this support and assistance provided?
8. What are the problems and difficulties experienced by asylum seekers in gaining access to affordable and adequate housing? Are these problems and difficulties qualitatively different from those experienced by Australian citizens?

### Section 3: Providing Support and Assistance

This section is to be devoted to all those programs and services that are dedicated to providing support and assistance to asylum seekers, particularly those provided by community organisations, faith based services and other non-government agencies that provide accommodation and housing support and assistance.

1. What is the role of non-government bodies (NGOs) and agencies (charities and faith based organisations) in meeting the housing/support and assistance needs of homeless asylum seekers?
2. What are the limitations on the role of NGO's and charities in supporting homeless asylum seekers?

3. What are some examples of programs and services that have succeeded in providing accommodation and housing support to asylum seekers who have become homeless or who have been at risk of homelessness?

4. How have existing specialist homelessness services responded to the increasing requests for support and assistance from asylum seekers? What are the limitations on what they can do?

## Section 4: What Is To Be Done?

The section is to be devoted to those who wish to advocate for the changes that they believe are required to provide adequate housing support and assistance to asylum seekers who have become homeless or who are risk of homelessness.

*\*This edition will focus on the homelessness experienced by asylum seekers. However, contributions are welcome for anyone wishing to discuss the issues of homelessness among the wider refugee community and the response to that homelessness.*

## Contributing to this edition of *Parity*

**Deadline:** All contributions need to be submitted by Friday November 14<sup>th</sup> 2014.

**Submissions:** All contributions should be submitted as Word attachments to an email addressed to [parity@chp.org.au](mailto:parity@chp.org.au)

**Word length:** Contributions can be up to 1600 words. This equates to a double page spread in *Parity*. Single page articles can be up to 800 words in length. Contributions of a greater length should be discussed with the *Parity* Editor.

**Questions:** If you have any questions at all about contributing to this edition please contact the *Parity* Editor by email [parity@chp.org.au](mailto:parity@chp.org.au) or ring 03 8415 6200

## Referencing

NB: Due to space considerations, contributors are encouraged to use endnotes when referencing their *Parity* articles. All works that are cited or referred to in an article should be referenced.

For example:

1. Johnson G, Kuehnle D, Parkinson S, Sesa S and Tseng Y 2014, '*Resolving long-term homelessness: A randomised controlled trial examining the 36 month costs, benefits and social outcomes from the Journey to Social Inclusion pilot program*', Sacred Heart Mission, St Kilda.

2. Parkinson S 2012, '*The Journey to Social Inclusion Project in Practice- A process evaluation of the first 18 months*', AHURI Research Centre, RMIT University, Melbourne, p. 19.

CHP does not encourage contributors to a bibliography of references used in the development of an article that are not cited in the article. There is simply insufficient space for the inclusion of extensive bibliographies.

For more detailed information on referencing and writing guidelines for *Parity* see:

<http://chp.org.au/services/parity-magazine/contribute-to-parity/>

## Assistance

Feedback, input and assistance can be provided with drafts if required. If prospective contributors have any questions at all they should contact the *Parity* Editor, [parity@chp.org.au](mailto:parity@chp.org.au) or ring 03 8415 6200.