

Human catastrophe

Bystanders to Afghans in agony

While we, rightfully, react to so many being desperate to flee their birthplace, our government abandons many of the 4000+ Afghan refugees and asylum seekers already here.

Left in limbo for years because of the government's determined efforts to avoid granting them permanent protection, most have no government support and, now, no employment due to Covid lockdowns. Among these are people medevaced from Nauru and Manus who have been languishing with untreated chronic health conditions for years.

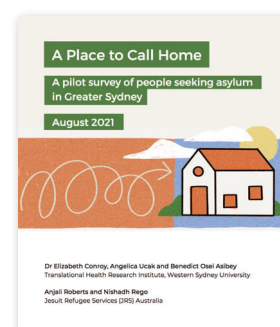
Pandemic bites deep

Refugees all but invisible yet totally exposed

Once again, refugees in our community are bearing the brunt of Covid lockdowns.

Frontline agencies are inundated with a tripling of crisis referrals since this lockdown's start. Such referrals mean a person seeking asylum risks becoming homeless or having no food in the next 24 hours.

The Jesuit Refugee Service and Western Sydney University recently released *A Place to Call Home*, reporting on how people seeking asylum have been affected by Covid up to March 2021.



Half

of respondents had lost their jobs or had hours reduced by March

45%

ran out of food in the first quarter of 2021

29%

had been evicted or forced to move as unable to pay rent

Sadly,

their worlds will have worsened during our more recent lockdowns

What can you do?

1: Ask your Federal and State MPs to increase their political support for people seeking asylum, specifically:

increase the Afghani refugee intake from the paltry 3,000 places currently announced

distinguish the intake of Afghan refugees from the annual humanitarian intake of 13,500 refugees

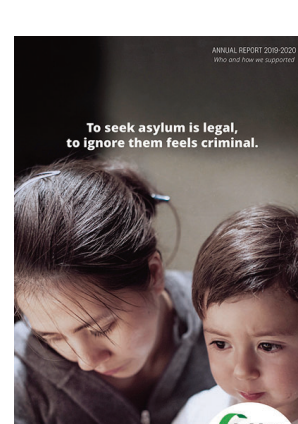
abolish Temporary Protection Visas and Safe Haven Enterprise Visas for Afghani refugees, replacing them with Permanent Protection Visas

offer the approximately 850+ Afghani BVE-holders urgent reviews and expeditious pathways to Permanent Protection

2: *Help us help people seeking asylum* with living allowances and rent assistance.

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Vale Virginia

It is with great sadness that we inform you of the death of Virginia Walker OAM, co-founder and past chair of Bridge for Asylum Seekers.

A long-time social justice activist, in 2002 Virginia discovered that asylum seekers were released from detention centres with no work rights, no Medicare, no financial means and no government support. Enlisting friends and like-minded individuals, Virginia co-founded Bridge for Asylum Seekers Foundation to support those without means living in the community while awaiting the processing of their asylum claims.

After working tirelessly for Bridge, Virginia retired in 2017. Now an independent charity, Bridge proudly maintains her legacy.

Virginia is remembered by the Bridge committee for her great compassion and her outspoken and energetic work on behalf of asylum seekers in need.