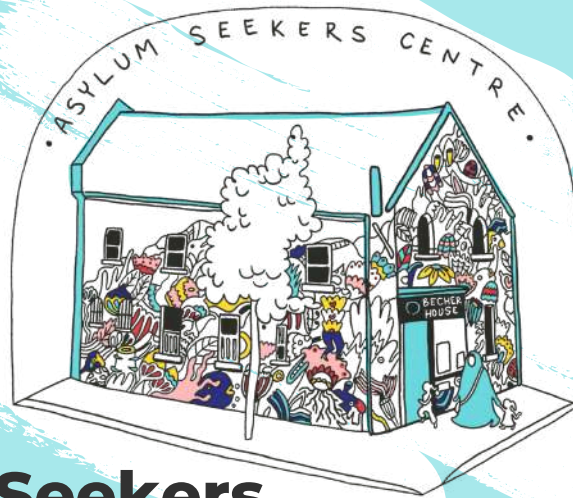


Asylum Seekers Centre

Compassion over cruelty

Our vision for the
2025-2028 Parliament





The Asylum Seekers Centre's perspective

The Asylum Seekers Centre has been a vital source of support and hope for people seeking safety and stability in our community for more than 30 years. In that time, we have never seen the scale of global displacement around the world and poverty crisis here at home that we do today.

At a time when people seeking asylum need a warm welcome and a helping hand more than ever, the system is failing them and public discourse is alienating them.

The sad truth is that, despite initial hope, the past three years have in many ways seen Australia move further from the Asylum Seekers Centre's vision for a society where we recognise our shared humanity, uphold human rights for all, and extend our welcome, respect, and support to people seeking asylum.

The next Parliament must be a turning point, and see Australia become a place that welcomes people seeking asylum, affirming their basic human rights to freedom from persecution, violence, and fear. In doing so, we will become a stronger, more vibrant country.



The upcoming 2025 Federal Election

For too long, elections have seen people seeking asylum and refugees treated like a political football - used to stir fear and stoke division in a grab for votes.

But the demonising narrative and punching down by our political class does not tell the whole story, and fails to reflect the humanity and compassion that is woven throughout Australian communities.

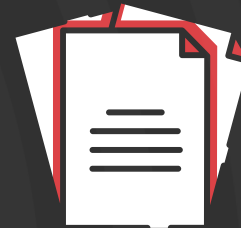
In Australia's 2025 federal election, we want to see our politicians mirror the best of our communities in choosing compassion over cruelty.

As campaigning for the federal election gets underway, we have put together the Asylum Seekers Centre's vision for the 48th parliament, including policies we believe should be introduced in the next parliament to ensure people seeking asylum in Australia can live in safety, security, and dignity.

The 2022-2025 Parliament

In the lead up to the 2022 federal election, Anthony Albanese's Labor pledged a 'compassionate' and 'humane' approach to refugees and people seeking asylum. However, the Labor government presided over a mixed bag of policies and laws when it came to protecting the rights of people seeking asylum.

Whilst the abolition of cruel temporary protection visas through the introduction of the Resolution of Status (RoS) visa, attempts to speed up the processing times for asylum applications, and an increase in Australia's humanitarian intake (still short of Labor's pledge) were welcome, the safety net available to people seeking asylum has continued to shrink. Meanwhile the government pursued the introduction of a series of draconian new laws which will severely infringe the rights of people seeking asylum in Australia, without due process, consultation with the broader community or people with lived experience, or adequate opportunity for detailed submissions and public debate.



The three brutal bills passed in late November 2024 introduced sweeping powers that were nothing short of an assault on human rights. These powers included:

- The power to pay third countries to accept non-citizens — including recognised refugees with Australian citizen family members
- Powers for Ministers to ban people from certain countries from seeking asylum
- Powers to allow authorities to seize communication items, including mobile phones, preventing people from communicating with their families, lawyers and the outside world

Despite opposition from refugee communities, advocates, and politicians across the country, the bills passed, creating new threats to the rights of refugees and people seeking asylum in Australia.

The 2025-2028 Parliament

Over the last three years, progress in some areas has been followed by challenges in others and the reality is people seeking asylum still face major obstacles to rebuilding their lives in Australia in safety and dignity.

In order to improve the lives of those fleeing conflict and persecution, whoever wins the 2025 federal election must introduce the following measures.

1. A meaningful safety net



Some people seeking asylum are eligible for Status Resolution Support Services (SRSS) payments. However the amount of support available has rapidly shrunk to tiny amounts in recent years and the number of people who receive support through the SRSS program has dropped from more than 29,000 in 2015 to around 2,000 people.

Meanwhile the lack of affordable housing in Australia disproportionately impacts people seeking asylum. They face significant barriers to securing sustainable housing, including language barriers, little to no Australian rental history, limited knowledge of the Australian housing market, and an inability to sign longer-term lease agreements due to the uncertain nature of their visa status.

Whoever wins the 2025 federal election must provide additional funding to states and territories to support people seeking asylum with increased access to emergency and temporary accommodation. Meanwhile the availability of SRSS is a lifeline to those people seeking asylum and can help them secure access to other key necessities such as housing. SRSS must be expanded so that all of those throughout the entire process of seeking asylum are eligible.

While many people seeking asylum in Australia have work rights, this is not guaranteed for all and work rights are tied to each person's visa status. This means that some people on temporary or bridging visas are not legally allowed to work, threatening them with destitution, extreme poverty, and homelessness. Giving people seeking asylum the right to work grants them dignity and ensures they are able to be self-sufficient whilst they have their protection claims processed.

Everyone seeking asylum and living in the community should have the right to work.

The Refugee Council of Australia estimates that as many as 30,000 people seeking asylum may not have access to Medicare. Australia's healthcare system is meant to be universal and yet thousands of the most vulnerable people in our society are being left out. Medicare enrolment is tied to visa status, meaning when a person seeking asylum's bridging visa expires and they receive a new visa, they must re-enrol in Medicare - a process that can take many months.

The system must be adapted to ensure that when a bridging visa is renewed, people seeking asylum have access to an interim Medicare card while their new visa is being processed.



2. A fairer process

Thousands of people seeking asylum who arrived in Australia by sea have been failed by the inaptly-named 'fast-track' system and are still living in limbo without a pathway to permanency.

This cruel system, introduced by the Abbott government in 2014, was designed to make it difficult for people to access protection and deter asylum claims, placing individuals on temporary bridging visas that have to be renewed every six months.

While Labor has acknowledged the 'fast track' system is unfair and committed to abolishing it, the fate of thousands of people who have lived in our community for more than a decade remains unclear.

Whoever wins the 2025 federal election must offer people failed by the 'fast track' system a pathway to permanency. It is time to finally give these people the chance to rebuild their lives and confirm what we all know – that Australia is their home.



3. Human rights for all

Since 2012, Australia has subjected people seeking asylum who arrived by sea to "offshore processing" in third-party countries such as Nauru. This cruel process has been condemned widely at home and abroad, including most recently by the UN Human Rights Committee whose [report](#) stated the Australian government's detention of people seeking asylum in Nauru had been a breach of their rights and the use of offshore processing did not absolve states of their human rights obligations to those seeking asylum.

The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees [estimates there are over 120 million displaced people](#) around the world today and Australia has a moral responsibility to help those fleeing war and persecution alongside other members of the international community. [Before the 2022 federal election, Albanese's Labor pledged to increase Australia's annual humanitarian intake to 27,000 people per year](#) and while the Government's efforts to increase the intake to 20,000 were welcome, they ultimately fell short of their original goal.

Whoever wins the 2025 federal election must increase Australia's humanitarian intake, close down Australia's offshore detention centres for good, ensure human rights are upheld for all, and work to create a more welcoming, just environment for people seeking asylum as they strive to rebuild their lives.