



Safety net - the role of government

The Idea of a safety net

The Safety Net page presents the case for government responsibility in providing a safety net for people seeking asylum. There is also an acknowledgement that for many years the Australian government has failed in that. In a variety of ways, both within government and in our society generally, people argue in favour of policies which are harsh and unfair.

Write a page to explain your own thinking about the level of support that Australian society, via governments, charities and other groups should provide to people who have sought asylum here.

The experience of a safety net and government policy

Read some of the stories on the BASP newsletter. Alternatively you may know someone else's experience of seeking asylum here.

Below is a list of some of the items that any single person might need in any week. Make a note of any others you can think of and then make an estimate of the costs of each item.

Item	Estimated cost per week
Rent	
Food	
Clothes	
Public transport	
Phone plan	
Internet plan	
Money put aside for gas, electricity or other bills	
Medical or pharmacy	
TOTAL	

Compare your total to the amount which you would receive as a single person from SRSS, the government payment, 89% of Newstart. Mid 2023 that is \$616. Following that, think about what would happen if the government decided a person should not receive any more help. Write about some steps they would have to take. Consider what you would do in a similar situation.

What can I do?

In your school there may be opportunities for you to initiate or join in actions such as prayer services, Circles of Silence or fund raising. Each one of these can help change our society's attitudes and bring about a better way.

Another action is writing to members of parliament. This can be done through the any campaigns that are ongoing via social media platforms and websites, or your own letter. Below is a draft which you can use or adapt. It is important to be polite, and it is also helpful to acknowledge any improvements in policy you are aware of. Examples are the fact that people are being moved from temporary visas to permanence and all have been moved from Nauru.

You can find your local member here – <https://electorate.aec.gov.au>

The appropriate forms of address are:

- Dear Prime Minister or Minister
- Dear Senator or
- Dear Ms or Mr for members of the Legislative Assembly if they are not ministers.

To be taken seriously you need to include your postal address (even if sending via email). Snail mail is said to be more effective and for some members you will be able to send emails only through their websites.

Dear

I write in relation to the support which people seeking asylum need, especially while their claims are being assessed. In the interests of humanity I believe we should end offshore processing and be treating people seeking asylum fairly, no matter how they come.

I acknowledge that the Labour government has undertaken to improve processes and to move people off temporary visas, both very positive steps. However, more needs to be done.

Those who are in our country awaiting assessment of their claims should have appropriate access to income and other supports and services, government funded legal support, and a fair review according to the Refugee convention. All found to be refugees should be welcomed and supported. No one should be sent back to persecution.

The current policies do not even make economic sense and they are certainly cruel in their impacts on many people.

I further believe that the impacts of harsh treatment will be lasting into the future. People of my generation will be the ones who have to fix the many problems that will follow.

I urge you to put in place policies that have respect for the dignity of all.

Yours sincerely,