



August 7, 2009

Submission No.5

(homelessness legislation)

A.O.C.

7/8/09

Dear Sir/Madam,

We are pleased to present to you the Asylum Seeker Resource Centre's Submission to the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Family, Community, Housing and Youth into the Homelessness legislation.

The ASRC's submission consists of the recently released position paper on *Homelessness of Asylum Seekers Living in the Community*, which was launched on August 3rd 2009.

The Federal Government's White Paper "*The Road Home*" is a welcome step towards reducing homelessness. However it is alarming that it does not mention asylum seekers at all, nor does it provide any initiatives about how community dwelling asylum seekers are to access housing.

The ASRC feels very strongly that human rights-based principles should underpin the provision of services to Australians who are homeless or at risk of homelessness. Human rights are universal, and apply to all people in Australia, regardless of their visa status. Asylum Seekers are living in the Australian community lawfully while they are awaiting the outcome of their protection application. Their basic human right to housing is currently violated every time they are turned away by Housing Services.

Patricia Faulkner AO, chairperson of the Social Inclusion Board, states that a strong legislative framework is vital for the implementation of the White Paper's goal of halving homelessness by 2020. We agree with this position, and recommend that asylum seekers' right to emergency and transitional accommodation be enshrined in legislation to assure ongoing access to these vital services.

Homelessness of Asylum Seekers Living in the Community documents the experiences and challenges faced by community-dwelling asylum seekers attempting to access the mainstream Housing Service System. It also highlights some existing community-based models of housing which can meet the needs of asylum seekers.

Of particular relevance to this inquiry are the following recommendations:

1. The Federal Government to ensure that housing for asylum seekers is included in the National Partnership Program on Social Housing
2. The Federal Government to ensure that the National Affordable Housing Agreement includes funding allocations towards the provision of services and support for asylum seekers at risk of homelessness.



3. The Social Inclusion Board to use their guiding principles in meeting with key Federal Government stakeholders to ensure that the basic needs of asylum seekers (especially housing) are represented.
4. The Social Inclusion Board to monitor that the Council on Homelessness includes asylum seekers in its National Affordable Housing Agreement - Partnership Program on Social Housing
5. A National Asylum Seeker Housing Network to be developed with relevant mainstream services, not-for-profit agencies and State and Federal Government representatives.
6. Existing examples of good collaborative practice and precedents (e.g. post-Homeless World Cup model) to be used as the basis to develop stronger working partnerships between Housing Services and Asylum Seeker Support Agencies at the national level.

We thank you for your interest in this issue, and remain available to discuss it further with the Committee.

Yours sincerely

Kon Karapanagiotidis
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