



The Hon Malcolm Turnbull MP  
Prime Minister  
Parliament House  
Canberra ACT 2600

Refugee Nurses of Australia  
40 Stornoway Ave  
St Andrews NSW 2566

Dear Prime Minister

The Refugee Nurses of Australia (RNA) represents nurses across Australia who provide care to people of refugee and asylum seeking background. RNA members have daily contact with those in the community whose lives are directly impacted by the recent decision to implement changes to the Status Resolution Support Services (SRSS) program. The current (SRSS) is set at 89% of the Commonwealth Newstart Allowance. Although this is barely a liveable income, SRSS payments have been a lifeline for many asylum seeking families and individuals. The ceasing of SRSS payments for many asylum seekers will increase the likelihood of thousands of already vulnerable individuals being further pushed into destitution and homelessness. The RNA strongly opposes this decision.

The Refugee Nurses Association of Australia calls upon Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull to show leadership and compassion and reverse this harsh and illogical policy.

The Federal government and those in the wider community, who support this measure to punish asylum seekers, should consider the histories of individuals who have escaped war and persecution to risk death by traveling the long and hazardous journey to Australia. Their journey frequently included extended periods in regions where they were without status or protection, including incarceration in detention centres. Many remain fearful of returning to their countries and have come to Australia with a hope of being provided protection.

In addition, from August 1, this same group of individuals will also lose access to critical torture trauma counselling and case management. The majority of this group are adult men and women many of whom suffer the post traumatic effects of pre migration trauma and the stress associated with ongoing uncertainty regarding their immigration status. As health care providers, RNA members are appalled by this cruel and short-sighted decision and are deeply

concerned about the certain health impacts associated with any restrictions to the SRSS program. Individuals who are offered humanitarian support are more likely to find employment and thrive within the community. People cannot restore the integrity of their lives without an income or access to food and basic accommodation. From a human rights perspective the ceasing of SRSS payments will have devastating impacts on individuals and communities. The RNA states this decision must be reversed as a matter of urgency.

The Federal government's aim for people who are seeking asylum to participate in the workforce will not be achieved by cutting income support. People seeking asylum want to work, but experience access difficulties in gaining employment. The Federal government should offer support, language training and skills development to assist SRSS recipients to overcome barriers to employment.

Dr Cassandra Goldie, CEO of ACOSS, says parents seeking protection are already skipping meals to pay for their children's medication and food. "It is appalling the government is wanting to cut people off income support entirely. What are people meant to do with no income at all? How can they feed and get their children to school?" says Dr Goldie.

Paul Power, from the Refugee Council of Australia also poses the question ". As a country, do we think it is acceptable that children go without meals, education, and a roof over their head? People will become homeless, their health will suffer ... they will be unable to feed themselves."

The cuts to the SRSS program will put further pressure on local communities and welfare services. The RNA considers this shifting of Federal responsibility to agencies that are already overstretched, in trying to provide basic support to people seeking asylum, as appalling.

The RNA urgently calls on the Federal government to reinstate the SRSS scheme for all people seeking protection in Australia.

Yours Sincerely

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