A New Country - But No Place to Call Home

The experiences of refugees and asylum seekers in housing crisis and strategies for improved housing outcomes

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The experiences of refugees and asylum seekers in housing crisis
and strategies for improved housing outcomes

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Melbourne
2004
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Glossary of terms

Homelessness

This report applies the cultural definition of homelessness proposed by Chamberlain and MacKenzie (1992). Three degrees of homelessness are identified:

*Primary homelessness*

*People without conventional accommodation, such as people living on the streets, sleeping in parks, squatting in derelict buildings, or using cars or railway carriages for temporary shelter.*

*Secondary homelessness*

*People who move frequently from one form of temporary shelter to another. It covers: people using emergency accommodation (such as hostels for the homeless or night shelters); teenagers staying in youth refuges; women and children escaping domestic violence (staying in women's refuges); people residing temporarily with other families (because they have no accommodation of their own); and those using boarding houses on an occasional or intermittent basis.*

*Tertiary homelessness*

*People who live in boarding houses on a medium to long-term basis. Residents of private boarding houses who do not have a separate bedroom and living room; they do not have kitchen and bathroom facilities of their own; their accommodation is not self-contained; and they do not have security of tenure provided by a lease.*

Housing Assistance Services

‘Housing assistance services’ refers to Homeless and Housing Services.

Primary Assistance Services

‘Primary assistance services’ refers to Specialist and Generalist Services assisting refugees and asylum seekers.

South-eastern Suburbs of Metropolitan Melbourne

Following advisory from the study steering committee the South-eastern Suburbs of Metropolitan Melbourne was geographically defined to include the following Local Government Areas (LGA’s): Greater Dandenong, Casey and Cardinia. In practice, however, refugees and asylum seekers residing in the South-eastern Suburbs of Metropolitan Melbourne found housing assistance outside this area. Therefore, to fully understand housing assistance for this group consultation involved service providers located outside the South-eastern Suburbs of Metropolitan Melbourne.

Participant Confidentiality

Due to the small scale scope of the study the researcher felt it important that quote sections identifying specific workers, clients and services be removed to ensure participant anonymity.

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### Abbreviations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ASAS</td>
<td>Asylum Seeker Assistance Scheme</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BV</td>
<td>Bridging Visa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CALD</td>
<td>Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Background</td>
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<tr>
<td>DIMIA</td>
<td>Department of Immigration and Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs</td>
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<td>HRASS</td>
<td>Homeless Refugee and Asylum Seeker Study</td>
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<td>HSS</td>
<td>Homeless Service Sector</td>
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<tr>
<td>IHSS</td>
<td>Integrated Humanitarian Settlement Strategy</td>
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<tr>
<td>MRC</td>
<td>Migrant Resource Centre</td>
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<tr>
<td>OAA</td>
<td>Ongoing Arrival Accommodation</td>
</tr>
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<td>OOH</td>
<td>Office of Housing (Victoria)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PPV</td>
<td>Permanent Protection Visa</td>
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<tr>
<td>RRT</td>
<td>Refugee Review Tribunal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SAAP</td>
<td>Supported Accommodation Assistance Program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SHP</td>
<td>Special Humanitarian Program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>THM</td>
<td>Transition Housing Management (Program)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TPV</td>
<td>Temporary Protection Visa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNHCR</td>
<td>United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees</td>
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<tr>
<td>VHS</td>
<td>Victorian Homelessness Strategy</td>
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Executive Summary

Background

Over the past decade, the Commonwealth Government has imposed tighter restrictions on various categories of refugees, asylum seekers and new migrants in obtaining access to the full range of available government services. These services include; settlement support, income support, housing assistance, emergency relief, health and dental services and children’s services.

Anecdotal evidence has indicated that demand at homeless services in Melbourne from refugees and asylum seekers has increased over the past 5 years. In 2002 the Victorian Homelessness Strategy (VHS) distributed its most recent report for developing responses to the increasing levels of homelessness in our community. The VHS identified people from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds, particularly humanitarian and refugee arrivals as a key group vulnerable to homelessness. Further, the VHS identified this groups’ need for new service models and greater flexibility in service delivery by the Homeless Service Sector (HSS).

Aim

The Homeless Refugee and Asylum Seeker Study (HRASS) was developed to better understand the housing needs of refugees and asylum seekers in Melbourne. The research objective were to:

- Profile the nature and the extent of demand refugees and asylum seekers place on housing assistance services.
- Document the circumstances and the issues that contribute to housing crisis for this client group.
- Make recommendations for:
  - Improving the assistance provided to the study population by homeless and housing services.
  - Improving the interface between the housing assistance services and the primary assistance networks for refugees and asylum seekers.
  - Government strategies to reduce homelessness and housing stress for the study population.

Methodology

The Homeless Refugee and Asylum Seeker Study (HRASS) involved workers and clients from primary and housing assistance services. The research examined the pathways into housing crisis for refugees and asylum seekers, their housing assistance needs and utilisation of housing assistance services. The study was undertaken in the South-eastern Suburbs of Metropolitan Melbourne as the population of refugees and asylum seekers in this area includes a sufficient range of visa categories, countries of origin and use of primary and housing assistance services.
The research had two main components:

- A targeted questionnaire provided quantitative documentation of the extent and nature of demand for assistance placed on mainstream housing assistance services from refugees and asylum seekers.
- A series of interviews captured the experiences and views of workers and refugee and asylum seeker clients from primary and housing assistance services.

**Study Findings**

**Entitlements and Community Support**

Settlement and reception entitlement restrictions were greater for refugees and asylum seekers who entered Australia via a DIMIA program other than the Offshore Refugee Program. Humanitarian visa category groups that entered Australia under DIMIA programs other than the Offshore Refugee Program included: asylum seekers, spouse entrants, TPV entrants, humanitarian entrants and New Zealand refugee entrants. This group had a greater reliance on fragmented, community delivered on-arrival support. Eligibility to government services was overall lower and some visa category groups were restricted the right to permanent protection, family reunion, work and income support.

**Vulnerability to Housing Crisis**

Restricted eligibility for settlement or reception entitlements increased refugees and asylum seekers risk of homelessness. For example, 88% of refugees and asylum seekers presenting to housing assistance services were presently or had a history of restricted eligibility to full settlement or reception entitlements. In addition, settlement barriers, such as cultural and language difficulties contributed to refugees and asylum seekers vulnerability to housing crisis. A large proportion of refugees and asylum seekers that presented to housing assistance services were recent arrivals (67%), indicating that this period posed greater risks to housing crisis compared to latter stages of resettlement.

Restricted eligibility to entitlements and settlement barriers increased the risk that refugees and asylum seekers needs failed to be identified or addressed. Over time personal issues such as financial and employment difficulty, social isolation and emotional stress accumulated, and increased vulnerability to housing crisis.

**Pathways into Housing Crisis**

Common pathways into homelessness included:
- Loss of right to work and income;
- Breakdown of proposer-entrant relationship;
- Social isolation from community and service support networks;
Low income associated with health, language, training and qualification related employment barriers; and
Community service sector demand overload.
Pathways into housing crisis were associated with entitlement restrictions as well as accumulation of personal issues by refugees and asylum seekers in the context of a limited service safety net.

Nature and Extent of Demand

Service utilisation patterns varied considerably among refugees and asylum seekers. However, a common theme observed involved their engagement in an ongoing service-user relationship with a primary service. The primary assistance service provided targeted assistance for a particular visa category or cultural background. Assistance for all the needs of the client was sought from this service, including housing. Refugees and asylum seekers were entirely reliant on their primary assistance service for general assistance and advocacy to access a broader range of essential services.

Housing assistance services for refugees and asylum seekers included a range of community delivered services. There was a variety of service models, including:
- Targeted housing assistance as a component of settlement or reception services;
- Targeted housing assistance based in a mainstream housing service; and
- Mainstream generalist housing assistance.

Targeted housing assistance as a component of settlement assistance was the preferred service model. This assistance is available to offshore refugee entrants. However, the Commonwealth has withdrawn targeted service provision for other visa category groups. This has effectively shifted service provision for these groups to a fragmented response from a range of community delivered services.

Primary assistance services reported difficulty addressing housing stress experienced by their refugee and asylum seeker clients. No less than one quarter of refugee and asylum seeker clients of primary assistance services were experiencing homelessness.

Demand for housing assistance presenting to primary assistance services did not flow to housing assistance services. Utilisation of available housing assistance by refugees and asylum seekers appeared to be limited by:
- A mismatch between refugee and asylum seeker needs and available accommodation and housing support; and
- Poor information flow between service sectors and provider teams, which reduced housing assistance services responsiveness to the special needs and life circumstances of this group.

Less than 1% of total clients presenting to housing assistance services were either refugees or asylum seekers. However, the circumstances of this group placed additional resource burdens on housing assistance services compared to the general homeless client group. The high extent of need of this group was associated with Commonwealth Government policy constraint, the refugee or asylum seeker background and cultural and language barriers. Key difficulties for housing assistance service providers included: language barriers, support engagement.
challenges, low availability of accommodation for large families and low availability of support after housing crisis. The mismatch between housing assistance resources and the needs of the refugee and asylum seeker client group reduced the effectiveness of housing support.

The limited understanding by some housing assistance services of the needs of refugees and asylum seekers reduced responsiveness to the special needs of this client group. Specifically, eligibility criteria and assessment methods for some housing assistance services were judgmental of visa status or visa conditions and restricted access to assistance for specific visa categories. Also, this group was at risk of inappropriate referrals after they had entered the housing assistance service. For example, some housing assistance services referred refugees and asylum seekers in need of housing assistance to primary assistance services. There appeared to be confusion around the appropriate service providers of housing assistance for refugees and asylum seekers.

**Improving Housing Outcomes**

Prerequisites for improved housing outcomes included; efficient use of community based resources for the long-term; and housing stability for refugees and asylum seekers by improved well-being and capacity to settle.

In the absence of change to Commonwealth eligibility requirements, there is a pressing need for emergency relief targeted to refugee and asylum seeker clients.

Homeless refugees and asylum seekers had difficulty utilising mainstream housing services. Barriers to obtaining housing assistance for refugees and asylum seekers included:

- Incomplete client assessment processes;
- Limited accommodation infrastructure for cultural needs; and
- Ineffective housing support and service models.

Improved equality of access to housing assistance services for refugees and asylum seekers required greater sensitivity to the special circumstances of this group by client assessment processes. Improved sensitivity to cultural, torture and trauma backgrounds and visa conditions is needed.

Greater initiative by mainstream housing services is required to develop accommodation infrastructure that meets large families dwelling size needs and other cultural needs.

Housing assistance service providers require training to improve responsiveness to refugees and asylum seekers special needs and utilisation of cross-sector collaborative housing assistance. Further, increased resourcing to housing assistance service models targeting refugees and asylum seekers is needed to improve housing outcomes.
Recommendations

Commonwealth Government

- That all refugee visa category groups are eligible to the full range of available IHSS settlement services and refugee entitlements.
- That all asylum seeker visa category groups are eligible to the full range of available ASAS reception services and asylum seeker entitlements.

State Government

- In the absence of change to the eligibility requirements, that emergency relief targeting refugees and asylum seekers is made available for assistance to those experiencing housing crisis.

Office of Housing

- That the Office of Housing increase the availability of culturally appropriate housing infrastructure to refugee and asylum seeker communities for local level management.
- That the Office of Housing in collaboration with housing assistance services implement policy guidelines that specify eligibility and assistance for refugees, asylum seekers and other client groups ineligible for income and a Medicare card.
- That the Office of Housing implement client assessment processes that place greater emphasis on criteria that capture refugees and asylum seekers’ special circumstances. This includes increased weighting by client assessments of client history and risk of homelessness.
- That the Office of Housing implement a housing service client outcome measurement system which takes into account additional barriers to outcomes for asylum seeker clients.
- That the Office of Housing in collaboration with the Department of Immigration and Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs appoint a housing establishment worker to assist newly arrived refugees and asylum seekers.

Assistance Services

- That housing assistance services in partnership with primary assistance services ensure equity of access to their services for refugees and asylum seekers.
- That housing assistance services in partnership with primary assistance services explore service exit plan opportunities for refugee and asylum seeker clients experiencing severe restriction from services and rights.
- That crisis and transitional housing assistance services ensure client entry to their services is facilitated by the location of crisis housing personnel at relevant generalist services accessed by refugees and asylum seekers.
Introduction

1.1 Background

Over the past decade, the Commonwealth Government has imposed tighter restrictions on various categories of refugees, asylum seekers and new migrants in obtaining access to the full range of available government services. These services include; settlement support, income support, housing assistance, emergency relief, health and dental services and children’s services.

Anecdotal evidence has indicated that demand at homeless services in Melbourne from refugees and asylum seekers has increased. Five years ago Hanover undertook a limited data collection to assess the level of demand, which found that about 2% of the 2,800 clients assisted in 1997-8 fell into the above categories. During Hanover's recent Strategy Review consultations, workers raised a range of issues in providing assistance to asylum seekers and refugees. It was suggested that the level of demand and extent of needs of these groups had increased substantially over the past 5 years.

The 2002 Victorian Homelessness Strategy (VHS) Action Plan and Strategic Framework Report, 'Directions for Change' details responses to the increasing levels of homelessness in our community. People from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds, particularly humanitarian and refugee arrivals were identified by the VHS as a key group vulnerable to homelessness. However, the needs of refugees and asylum seekers and implications on services are not well understood. Furthermore, the VHS 'Directions for Change' report indicated the need for new service models and greater service flexibility.

1.2 Aims and Objectives

This project endeavors to obtain a better understanding of the extent and nature of demand for housing assistance for refugees and asylum seekers in Melbourne. Including the documentation of circumstances and issues that contribute to housing crisis for this client group.

The Homeless Refugee and Asylum Seeker Study (HRASS) was developed to better understand the housing needs of refugees and asylum seekers in Melbourne resulting in:

- Improved service delivery to refugee and asylum seeker clients.
- Definition of the role housing assistance services should play amongst the network of services assisting refugees and asylum seekers, and
- An evidence base for a better integrated whole of government response to this groups needs.

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2 M. Horn, (1998), Hanover Client Special Collection on Refugee and Asylum Seekers,
4 Ibid.
The supporting objectives include:

- Profile the nature and the extent of demand refugees and asylum seekers place on homeless and housing services in the South-eastern Suburbs of Metropolitan Melbourne. This includes an assessment of the representativeness of this demand for the broader Melbourne area.

- Analyse the circumstances and the issues that contribute to housing crisis for this client group.

- Make recommendations for improving the assistance provided to the study population by housing assistance services.

- Make recommendations for improving the interface between the housing assistance services and the primary assistance networks for refugees and asylum seekers; best practice models to be documented and disseminated.

- Make recommendations to government on strategies to reduce homelessness and housing stress for the study population.

- Generate material for raising public awareness of the difficulties faced by asylum seekers and refugees.

### 1.3 Methodology

The Homeless Refugee and Asylum Seeker Study (HRASS) incorporates qualitative and quantitative research methods. Service providers and clients across primary and housing assistance service sectors were involved in the study. Project methodology phases are illustrated by figure 1.3.1. As shown by figure 1.3.1, a targeted questionnaire provided quantitative documentation of the nature and extent of demand refugee and asylum seeker clients place on housing assistance services. In addition, qualitative analysis was undertaken of data obtained from a series of semi-structured interviews and focus groups involving clients and service providers. These data collections documented refugees and asylum seekers needs, assistance networks and pattern of demand. The study was undertaken in the South-eastern Suburbs of Metropolitan Melbourne as the population of refugees and asylum seekers in this area includes a sufficient range of visa categories, countries of origin and use of welfare services. Oversight to the research was provided by the project steering committee, which included representatives from primary and housing assistance service sectors.

The refugee and asylum seeker client questionnaire was collected by workers at key Transitional Housing Management (THM) and Supported Accommodation Assistance Program (SAAP) services for the South-eastern Suburbs of Metropolitan Melbourne. These services function as an entry points to housing assistance services in the area. Training sessions provided service staff essential information for the completion of the questionnaire. The collection period was three months to account for natural inconsistencies in presenting demand.
Figure 1.3.1 Project Methodology Phases

**Project Aim**
- Improve service delivery to refugee and asylum seeker clients.
- Define the role homeless and housing services should play amongst the network of agencies assisting refugees and asylum seekers.
- Advocate for a better integrated whole of government response to this groups' needs.

**Supporting Research Objectives**
- Profile the nature and the extent of demand for housing assistance.
- Analyse the circumstances and the issues that contribute to housing crisis.
- Explore strategies — improving housing assistance.
- Explore strategies — improving the interface between housing assistance services and primary assistance networks.
- Explore strategies — government role to reduce homelessness.

**Study Area**
South-eastern suburbs of Metropolitan Melbourne
Victoria, Australia
- Tighter restrictions on access to the full range of services.
- Victorian Homeless Strategy Report (2002) identified:
  - humanitarian and refugee arrivals as a key group vulnerable to homelessness.
  - the needs and implications on service delivery of this client group are not well understood.

**Context**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questionnaire</th>
<th>Semi-structured Interview</th>
<th>Focus Group</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Refugee and asylum seeker clients for housing assistance services</td>
<td>Refugee and asylum seeker clients for primary and housing assistance services</td>
<td>Primary assistance service providers</td>
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<tr>
<td>Housing assistance service providers</td>
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**Analysis**
Integrative concept analysis of project data collections

**Report**
Research findings and recommendations address the project aim and supporting research objectives.

**Dissemination**
Generation of material for distribution including: project report, print media papers. Presentation of material to relevant parties.

**Review**
Review of the implementation of project recommendations to identify possible areas of success and further need with respect to project aims.
A pilot of the client questionnaire was undertaken over a two-week period. The pilot provided an opportunity to identify areas for potential design improvement and to engage service staff in the broader project.

A series of semi-structured interviews involved refugee and asylum seeker clients and service providers. Participants of interviews and focus groups were a volunteer sample and included a cross section of clients and service providers. Specifically participants in the interview series included:

- 17 interviews with a cross-section of the refugee and asylum seeker population to identify common issues and pathways into homelessness. Clients unable to speak or understand English participated through the provision of interpreters and translated literature.
- 20 interviews with primary assistance services to collect information on the extent of housing needs, reasons for referral to housing assistance services, and practice issues arising. Workers’ views on how to prevent homelessness for this client group were sought.
- A focus group with staff in 4 housing assistance services to document the difficulties of working with this client group, strategies for improving services responses, and the impact of current demand on service delivery.

Following the completion of a draft report a stakeholders workshop was held to disseminate the findings of the study and to encourage consideration of their implications on relevant policies and programs.

1.4 Research Ethics

The project steering committee provided oversight of issues pertaining to ethics throughout the project. Particular attention was paid to developing effective procedures sensitive to participants’ background. This included procedures that ensure participants were fully informed about the project aims and objectives, and their involvement. Informed consent was required from all participants. The interviewer communicated to participants that personal information on study participants was confidential and data was securely stored, only accessible to research personnel. Refugee and asylum seeker interview participants were reimbursed $30.

The research was undertaken with guidance of Hanover Welfare Services Ethics Policy, which ensured the following ethical principles underpinned the research:

- Benefit homeless people or those at imminent risk of homelessness;
- Be based on available evidence and where possible, cite objective data;
- Seek to educate the community on the causes of homelessness and solutions to homelessness;
- Respect the right to confidentiality of each person experiencing homelessness;
- Pose no threat to participants and bring them no harm;
- Give participants the right to refuse to participate at any stage of the research process; and
- Allow participants to be considered as partners in the research process.
1.5 Sampling Framework

Key housing assistance services in the South-east of Metropolitan Melbourne participated in focus group and questionnaire data collections. Participants included WAYSS and Hanover Southern, the THM services for the South-eastern Suburbs of Metropolitan Melbourne. Also, the South East Crisis Accommodation Service (SECAS) participated, the SAAP service in the area that functions as a key entry point to homeless services.

Housing assistance service staff identified primary assistance services for consultation. Factors affecting agency selection were: the inclusion of primary assistance services targeting humanitarian entrants, TPV entrants, asylum seekers living in the community, and a generalist client group.

Refugee and asylum seeker interview participants were accessed through primary and housing assistance services that participated in worker interviews and focus groups. It was a criterion of participation that the client had experienced housing crisis in Australia. The sample frame for the refugee and asylum seeker interviews included participants in a range of circumstances.

1.6 Data collection

Interview participants were invited to nominate a suitable interview time and location. Consultations of primary and housing assistance services took place at the participating service. Most refugee and asylum seeker interviews took place at the participants current home. A small proportion of client interviews were undertaken at the participants support service.

Informed consent was obtained for all interviews and focus groups. Directly prior to the interview the interviewer reiterated ethical and general interview details, including: an overview of the interview content, overall research goals and ethical protocols. At the close of the interview all participants were asked if there was any other details they would like to add and if they had any further questions about the study. On conclusion of the worker interviews participants were asked if they would like to respond to the draft report. Client interview participants were asked if they would like to be informed of results from the study.

1.7 Analysis and Interpretation

Consultation of primary and housing assistance services provided information necessary to map housing assistance to refugees and asylum seekers for the study area. Coupled with client interviews and documentation of demand presenting at key housing assistance services, analysis provides a richly contextualised profile of refugees and asylum seekers needs and access to housing assistance. Links are made between circumstances of refugees and asylum seekers and vulnerability to housing crisis. Future directions for improving refugees and asylum seekers housing outcomes are explored and recommendations made.
1.8 Limitations of Methodology

The project methodology presented a number of limitations. Participants for the series of interviews including refugees, asylum seekers and service providers were of a volunteer sample and therefore may not reflect the views and experiences of the general population. Also, given the reliance of the interview method on self-reporting data collected may contain bias of socially desirable responses.

The study geography was limited to the South East of Metropolitan Melbourne. Some variance in the client group and service providers by region of Melbourne may be expected due to area cultural differences.

The questionnaire collection was reliant on housing assistance service providers identifying refugee and asylum seeker clients amongst the general client group. Short contact when requesting assistance may mean that refugee and asylum seeker backgrounds were not disclosed to workers.

Quantitative analysis of questionnaire data is limited in scope due to a smaller than expected client population size. Anecdotal evidence and pilot questionnaire data had suggested client population numbers would be higher than the actual data collected. Specifically, during a two-week pilot 9 clients presented to housing assistance services, however only an additional 7 responses were obtained for the following three month project data collection. This apparently low response to the final questionnaire may relate to reduced demand or the lack of priority due to staff constraints that limited commitment made available to the data collection. Therefore the responses from both the pilot and final questionnaire have been combined in the analysis discussed throughout the report. Having consulted with experts in the field this client profile is indicative of the refugee and asylum seeker population presenting to housing assistance services in Melbourne. Total demand recorded is likely to be an undercount.

In accounting for the reduced capacity for quantitative analysis participant sample sizes for the client interview collection were increased from 10 to 17 and for the primary assistance service provider interviews from 15 to 20.

1.9 Report Framework

The following provides an overview of the report. Section 1 details the study background and methodology. Section 2 provides an overview of entitlements and community support for refugees and asylum seekers in specific visa categories. The circumstances and issues associated with vulnerability to housing crisis for this group are detailed in section 3. Demand and assistance for primary and housing assistance services is explored by section 4. Also, service responses by housing assistance services to refugees and asylum seekers is examined in this section. Section 5 discusses future directions for improving housing assistance to refugees and asylum seekers. This section also explores strategies for improved housing outcomes. Section 6 discusses study findings, making recommendations for the improvement of housing assistance; the interface between housing assistance services and primary assistance networks; and the governments’ role in reducing homelessness.
Entitlements and Community Support

Australia is a signatory to the United Nations Refugee Convention (1951) and Protocol (1967). Signatories to the Convention and Protocol have committed to providing asylum and basic entitlements to refugees. Article 1 under the UNHCR convention defines a refugee as a person who has fled their home owing to a ‘well-founded fear of persecution because of his/her race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group or political opinion’.

Refugees and asylum seekers in Australia are provided access to various settlement and mainstream services. However, there are varying degrees of eligibility to entitlements, which is enforced by visa conditions. The following section provides an overview of the various entitlements and community support available to refugees and asylum seekers for specific visa categories. Visa category labels defined in this section are used throughout the report. Eligibility to entitlements documented in this section have been set down by Commonwealth law and apply uniformly across Australia. Documentation of community support was specific to the study area.

2.1 Asylum Seekers in Detention

Asylum seekers who reach Australia without a visa may be detained under Commonwealth law while their refugee status is determined. Figure 2.1.1 provides an overview of the protection visa application process for asylum seekers living in detention. Asylum seekers in detention may be processed under either the offshore or onshore program. The process of applying for a protection visa under the onshore program provides multiple points of appeal if an application is rejected. Specifically, under the onshore program the stages of application for a protection visa in order of appeal are: Department of Immigration and Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs (DIMIA), Refugee Review Tribunal (RRT), Federal Court, High Court, and the Minister. On the other hand, asylum seekers in detention applying for a protection visa under the offshore program have a single opportunity to apply to DIMIA for protection. Detained asylum seekers recognised as refugees were commonly provided a temporary protection visa (TPV). The entitlements and community support available to TPV entrants are outlined in section 2.3.

Entitlements to asylum seekers living in detention includes basic material needs, however, denies freedom. The process of refugee determination for many applicants takes many months, for some applicants as many as 40 months. Detainees granted a protection visa are released from detention to live in the community often with limited support. A community sector worker reported that TPV entrants recently released from detention were provided no more than $200, a change of clothes and a photocopied page from a Melways.

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6 ibid.
7 ibid.
Temporary Protection Visa (XB451) (XB447) 

Application Rejected 
Application Accepted 
No Visa 

Stages of Application for a Protection Visa 

RRT 
DIMIA 

Accepted 
Rejected 

High Court 

Federal Court 

Minister 

Deportation 

Temporary Protection Visa (XA785) 

Asylum Seeker Living in the Detention 
The Offshore Program 
The Onshore Program 

Figure 2.1.1 Protection Visa Application Process for Asylum Seekers in Detention
2.2 Asylum Seekers in the Community

Asylum seekers who reach Australia with a visa commonly lived in the community while their protection visa application was finalised. Figure 2.2.1 illustrates the application process for asylum seekers living in the community. Asylum seekers living in the community are provided legal status under Commonwealth law by a bridging visa (BV). As shown by figure 2.2.1, different bridging visa subclasses are provided at different points of the application process. If recognised as a refugee a permanent protection visa (XA866) is commonly provided. An outline of entitlements available to onshore refugee entrants is provided by section 2.5.

The conditions of different bridging visa subclass vary. Asylum seekers with applications at the DIMIA or RRT stages were provided bridging visa subclasses A, B or C. Asylum seekers with these visa's may be eligible to the Asylum Seeker Assistance Scheme (ASAS), the right to work and Medicare. Applicants who pass the DIMIA and RRT stages and seek judicial review or Ministerial intervention were provided a bridging visa subclass E (BVE). These asylum seekers had severe entitlement restrictions, including restricted eligibility to the ASAS. Bridging visa subclasses may allow for asylum seekers to travel outside Australia (bridging visa subclass B) and for asylum seekers who arrive without a visa to live in the community rather than in detention (bridging visa subclass C).

The 45 day rule may restrict eligibility to entitlements for asylum seekers. Specifically, asylum seekers are not eligible to the ASAS or to work if they spent 45 or more days in Australia in the 12 months immediately preceding the date of application for a protection visa. A number of asylum seekers found to be in breach of the 45 day rule were ineligible to Medicare due to conditions that restrict eligibility from persons who do not have permission to work or a parent, spouse or child who is an Australian citizen or permanent resident.

The ASAS is a Commonwealth Government funded support scheme, and operates in lieu of welfare support available to Australian permanent residents. The scheme is administered by the Australian Red Cross. Commonwealth law specifies eligibility conditions for the scheme. The majority of asylum seekers eligible to the ASAS meet vulnerability exemption criteria. For example, vulnerability exemption criteria provide eligibility to persons who are disabled. Asylum seekers who do not meet the vulnerability exemption criteria may be eligible after waiting six months or more for the finalisation of their protection visa application. However, asylum seekers were ineligible if their protection application had passed the DIMIA and RRT stages or if the protection application was lodged 45 days or more after arrival in Australia. Government support available under the ASAS was coordinated by a central case worker and included: income support, health support, specialist trauma counseling, material aid, education and legal referrals, and social support. Referrals to overseas tracing services and visits to immigration detention centres are also provided.

Asylum seekers with restricted entitlements may be reliant for all their living needs on a range of fragmented community delivered services. Some asylum seekers have personal resources with which to support themselves, however over time these are eventually exhausted. Also, the community sector has limited resources, and has the capacity to provide support for only basic living needs. Support services located in the study area provided: material aid (food, clothing,
Figure 2.2.1: Protection Visa Application Process for Asylum Seekers in the Community
furniture, house goods) support, advocacy and accommodation. Public transport tickets and phone cards were available if a cash donation was made recently. Community services assisting asylum seekers utilised 3 community owned properties in the study area. Tenancy management was undertaken by live-in support workers, and long-term residencies were provided. Local services refer clients to free community services in areas outside the South-eastern suburbs of Metropolitan Melbourne for a range of needs including: health services, legal representation, housing and income support.

Asylum seekers who live in the community may be ineligible for a number of mainstream services including: health, housing, training, employment and income support. This group may be ineligible to work.

A number of Melbourne community groups work with asylum seekers, however the Asylum Seeker Project - Hotham Mission (ASPHM) is a key provider of accommodation and housing support. The Asylum Seeker Project - Hotham Mission works with asylum seekers who do not have access to any kind of income or Medicare. It was the consensus view of primary assistance service providers that without assistance provided by the Asylum Seeker Project - Hotham Mission the rate of homelessness for asylum seekers living in Melbourne would be considerably higher. A community sector worker commented about the level of homelessness for asylum seekers:

‘For asylum seekers living in Sydney or Brisbane there is no Asylum Seeker Project equivalent so the levels of homelessness are much higher...’ (community sector worker).

Assistance provided by the Asylum Seeker Project - Hotham Mission was coordinated by a central case worker and included: medium to long term housing and support, basic living assistance, outreach support, social support programs, HEF and emergency relief referrals to medical, legal and other services. At the time of interview the agency managed 31 properties, which housed 101 asylum seekers who had a bridging visa E. The Asylum Seeker Project Living Assistance Payment provided an average of $30 per week, depending on available resources.

2.3 Temporary Protection Visa Entrants

Temporary protection visa (TPV) entrants are UNHRC recognised refugees. However, under Commonwealth law TPV entrants are not entitled to permanent protection. The VISA of a TPV Entrant enables residence in Australia for a specified time period of between 2 and 5 years. The TPV is a relatively new visa subclass, which was introduced to Australia’s refugee program in 1999.

Figure 2.3.1 illustrates the process of application for a protection visa by TPV entrants. As shown by figure 2.3.1 TPV entrants may have applied for protection under either the onshore or offshore programs. TPV entrants eligibility for permanent protection was contingent on their mode

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9 Asylum Seeker Project (2003), Welfare Issues and Immigration Outcomes for Asylum Seekers on Bridging Visa E.
Figure 2.3.1 Protection Visa Application Process for Temporary Protection Visa Entrants

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Temporary Protection Visa Entrant

No Breach of 7 Day Rule

Application Accepted

Application Rejected

Deportation

Iterative

Temporary Protection Visa XA785

Permanent Protection Visa XA866

Deportation

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of arrival to Australia. Specifically, Commonwealth legislation restricted permanent protection from TPV entrants judged to have spent 7 days or more en route to Australia in a country where they could have sought protection (TPV subclasses XA785 and XB447). If these entrants were judged to have a continuing need for protection their TPV may be iteratively renewed. TPV entrants who have been judged to have spent less than 7 days in any country where they may have sought protection en route to Australia (TPV subclasses XB451 and XA785) may apply for a permanent protection visa (PPV subclass XA866). TPV entrants commonly applied for an ongoing visa six months prior to their current visa expiry date. An outline of entitlements available to onshore refugee entrants is provided by section 2.5 of this chapter.

Visa conditions restricted access for TPV entrants to mainstream services including: training and employment services. Settlement services restricted from TPV entrants included: arrival and on-arrival support and settlement information.

TPV entrants can access most mainstream services, however by comparison to other entrants have limited access to settlement support. TPV entrant entitlements included; Centrelink income support, work rights, Medicare, specialist counseling, English language tuition and primary and secondary level education.

Assistance provided by the community sector to TPV entrants primarily responded to persons with ongoing settlement, torture and trauma difficulties. Core services provided by the community sector provided assistance with: housing, employment, health and advocacy. Housing assistance included; crisis accommodation, tenancy management, housing case work support, private rental market entry support, HEF referrals and emergency relief referrals. Community agencies assisting TPV entrants have nomination rights to 6 THM properties in the study area. The properties are utilised for short-term assistance and tenancy management was undertaken by support workers. After up to 3 months tenants were provided a rental reference from the agency and assistance to enter private rental accommodation.

2.4 Humanitarian Entrants

Humanitarian entrants (visa subclass XB202) are provided permanent protection under the Special Humanitarian Program (SHP), a component of DIMIA’s offshore program. Humanitarian entrants must provide guarantee of support from a proposer, and following arrival are reliant on their relationship with the proposer for settlement assistance. Humanitarian entrants are eligible to mainstream services, however access was limited to settlement services. Support from settlement services under the IHSS was provided to the proposer in preparation to and following the arrival of the humanitarian entrant. In the long term settlement services may transfer support to the humanitarian entrant. Under the Community Settlement Services Scheme (CSSS) funding of small scale settlement programs may target humanitarian entrants.

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11 ibid.
12 ibid.
Humanitarian entrants were almost entirely reliant on community support, especially on arrival. Humanitarian entrants were met at the airport and accommodated by their proposer or a member of the proposers’ ethnic community. New arrivals stayed with host households for three to four weeks before private rental accommodation was arranged. Other assistance provided by the community includes support to access mainstream services such as: Centrelink income support, Medicare, specialist trauma counseling and settlement services. Informal medium-term hosting and emergency housing was provided to humanitarian entrants, by their immediate ethnic community. Assistance provided under a CSSS grant included: information sessions for private and public housing providers, cross-cultural training, support and advocacy, tenancy management (2 properties), financial assistance, public housing applications and financial counseling. Referrals were provided to a range of services including: Centrelink, the bond loans scheme and the tenants union. Settlement services restricted from this group included: arrival and on-arrival support and settlement information.

2.5 Refugee Entrants

Refugee entrants may have been granted permanent protection in Australia under either the offshore or onshore program. Refugee entrants are eligible for government settlement assistance. ‘Migrant Resource Centres’ (MRC) and ‘Migrant Service Agencies’ functions as a central service assistance point for this group. However, eligibility for settlement assistance programs varied and was determined by entry program type (offshore or onshore).

Refugee entrants under the offshore program included four visa subclasses: Refugee (XB200), In-country Special Humanitarian Program (XB201), Emergency Rescue (XB203) and Woman at Risk (XB204). Entrants under the offshore refugee category are provided access to the Integrated Humanitarian Settlement Strategy (IHSS). The IHSS provides offshore refugee entrants the following assistance: meeting at the airport and accompanying to Ongoing Arrival Accommodation (OAA), payment of airfares to Australia and medical check costs, in person referral to settlement and mainstream services (such as Centrelink, Medicare, torture and trauma counselling and adult education), material aid, health assessment and intervention, settlement and housing support. A settlement plan was developed and OAA housing was available rent free for a maximum of 4 weeks. MRC settlement workers assessed the housing needs of newly arrived refugee entrants, and applications were written for public housing where needed. Offshore refugee entrants were eligible to IHSS services for 12 months following arrival in Australia, however, onshore refugee entrants were generally not eligible. As an exception onshore refugee entrants who were detained by the Commonwealth Government while their protection visa application was assessed may be eligible for the health assessment and intervention program.

Onshore refugee entrants (under the XA886 visa subclass) and offshore refugee entrants may be eligible for long-term MRC support programs. Funding of long-term MRC support programs is grant based under the CSSS. Programs at the time of the study included: private rental market entry intense support program (one month), group fun classes, general rental market advocacy and social support programs.
2.6 New Zealand Accepted Refugee Arrivals

Refugees arriving from New Zealand had restricted access to most social security payments in Australia. Social security payments that were not restricted included: Family Tax Benefit, Maternity Allowance, Maternity Immunisation Allowance, Childcare Benefit, Double Orphan Pension, Health Care Card and Commonwealth Seniors Health Card. While the Family Tax Benefit may initially provide a sufficient income for persons with multiple accompanying children, over time children aged and became ineligible for assistance. Assistance from the community sector to this group varied. Some services reported that they felt obligated to support New Zealand refugee households who were being supported by community volunteers. Other services had a blanket policy of not assisting New Zealand refugee arrivals. It was the consensus view of service providers that return to New Zealand was the best option for households without community support.

2.7 Spouse Entrants

Australian citizens, Australian permanent residents and certain New Zealand citizens are eligible to sponsor a spouses’ residence in Australia. Figure 2.7.1 illustrates the process of obtaining permanent residence for the spouse of a refugee or humanitarian entrant. During the first two years of residence in Australia DIMIA requires the sponsor to assist the spouse ‘financially and with accommodation’.14 As shown by figure 2.7.1, only after a two year period or until a permanent visa was issued is the spouse eligible to government support. That is unless there is a proven ‘substantial change in circumstances beyond the person’s control’.15 Spouses were eligible to enroll with Medicare, however were responsible for travel costs and on-arrival medical check costs.16 Sponsored spouses were eligible to English language tuition after acceptance of permanent residence, usually two years after arrival. As shown by figure 2.7.1, sponsored spouses arriving under the offshore program (subclasses 309, 310 and 300) hold provisional visa’s and after a two year period may be eligible for a migrant visa (subclasses 100 and 110). Persons applying inside Australia were provided a temporary visa (subclasses 820 and 826) and after two years may be eligible for a residence visa (subclasses 801 and 814).

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14 DIMIA (2004), Migration Booklet.
15 ibid.
16 ibid.
2.8 Summary

Commonwealth law commits Australia to providing asylum and basic entitlements to refugees and asylum seekers, however, examination of visa application processes reveals inequities in permanent visa wait timeframes and eligibility to settlement and reception entitlements. Furthermore, the erosion of refugees and asylum seekers accessibility to entitlements and lengthening of permanent visa wait timeframes was observed over the past 10 year period.

Settlement and reception entitlement restrictions were greater for refugees and asylum seekers entering Australia with a DIMIA Program outside the offshore refugee program, compared to their offshore refugee entrant counterparts. This group had a greater reliance on a fragmented community delivered response to their needs. Visa category groups included: asylum seekers, spouse entrants, TPV entrants, humanitarian entrants and New Zealand refugee entrants. Eligibility to government settlement, reception and mainstream services was overall lower for this group. Also, refugees and asylum seekers entering Australia on humanitarian grounds had a greater risk of being restricted rights to permanent protection, family reunion and work. Restricted eligibility to settlement and reception entitlements as imposed by Commonwealth law increased refugees and asylum seekers resettlement difficulties and impeded participation in community life. The obscure legal status imposed by a number of refugee and asylum seeker visa categories made service provision to this group difficult for primary and housing assistance services.
Housing Crisis Vulnerability

Vulnerability to housing crisis for refugees and asylum seekers was associated with a number of circumstances and personal issues. Refugees and asylum seekers may be restricted access to the full range of settlement or reception entitlements by visa conditions. The disruption of settlement or reception processes caused by restrictions increased vulnerability to housing crisis. Secondly, settlement and reception barriers, such as torture and trauma related health difficulties, cultural and language difficulties contributed to housing crisis vulnerability. When seeking housing the specific needs of this group for scarce private and public rental accommodation presented barriers to accessing appropriate housing. Also, refugees and asylum seekers were vulnerable to discrimination when applying for rental properties, which increased housing access difficulties. Over time entitlement restrictions, settlement barriers and housing difficulties were associated with an accumulation of personal issues such as, financial and employment difficulty, social isolation and emotional stress. The following section details the circumstances and issues, which contributed to refugees and asylum seekers housing crisis vulnerability.

3.1 Circumstances

3.1.1 Restricted Eligibility to Entitlements

A number of refugee and asylum seeker visa categories were restricted eligibility to settlement and reception entitlements. Restricted entitlements included a range of rights and services. For example, visa conditions denied some asylum seekers living in the community the right to work and access to Medicare. Also, visa conditions restricted full access to services for the following visa categories: humanitarian entrants, TPV entrants, asylum seekers living in the community, spouse entrants and New Zealand refugee arrivals. Restricted eligibility to settlement or reception entitlements appeared to increase the risk of homelessness for refugees and asylum seekers. Questionnaire data of refugees and asylum seekers who presented to housing assistance services showed that the majority (88%) of this client group was currently or had been restricted entitlements. The following section examines the impact of restricted entitlements on housing crisis vulnerability.

3.1.1.1 Arrival Support

Arrival support from the Australian Government, including payment of travel and medical check costs was provided to offshore refugee entrants. However, all other humanitarian visa categories were ineligible for arrival support. This included humanitarian entrants, TPV entrants, refugee spouse entrants and asylum seekers. Refugees and asylum seekers ineligible for government assistance and without personal resources loaned money to pay arrival costs. Support workers reported that many of their clients had spent ‘thousands of dollars’ on arrival costs. It was the consensus view of service providers that refugee and asylum seeker clients had difficulty paying arrival costs. Further, there was a risk that debt from arrival costs would contribute to long-term financial difficulty. A support worker described common circumstances of large family households:
Some of my clients have as many as 10 children which amounts to a debt of $100,000. It is very hard to pay back. It is a big loss of income...’ (community sector worker).

Until debt from travel costs was re-paid capacity to financially support dependents was reduced. Some refugees and asylum seekers were completely unable to support dependents. Emotional stress was associated with inability to financially support dependents. A TPV entrant described his circumstances:

When I left my home country I sold my shop to pay for the trip. I sold everything. Relatives call me now because they need money, but I have none...I have mental stress about this...’ (TPV entrant).

Refugees and asylum seekers with debt from arrival costs had an increased risk of long-term financial difficulty and emotional stress.

3.1.1.2 On-arrival Support

On-arrival support from the Commonwealth Government, including provision of accommodation and material needs was provided to offshore refugee entrants. However, all other humanitarian visa categories were ineligible. Restricted eligibility to on-arrival support made refugees and asylum seekers heavily reliant on community support. A volunteer described the community based response provided to humanitarian entrants:

The new arrivals often share a house with a member of the community for the first 3 weeks. Then we get a place for all the recent new arrivals and we move them all to it...Generally people need furniture and white goods, links to services and their tax file number. The tax file number takes 21 days on average to come through. Without the tax file number there is no Centrelink payment. It is a challenge to get people through this period. This challenge is created by government policy...' (volunteer community sector worker).

Refugees and asylum seekers generally wait 3 weeks for a personal tax file number to be processed. No access to income is permitted before a tax file number is obtained.

Some visa groups are ineligible for on-arrival income support. For example, asylum seekers were ineligible to the Asylum Seeker Assistance Scheme (ASAS) for the six-month period after applying for protection, unless they met vulnerability criteria. Another example, spouse entrants commonly wait a two-year period before they can access Centrelink income support and other settlement services. A disabled refugee who sponsored his wife and children to live with him in Australia described his circumstances:

Our main source of income is sickness benefit...Our income is very low as my wife is ineligible for support...We are not on a lease and have stayed with friends. So we can only stay a little while...’ (humanitarian entrant who sponsored his spouse).
Newly arrived refugees and asylum seekers commonly were not able to live independently, and the great majority shared accommodation. Share housing increased affordability, however, was especially inappropriate for persons with a refugee or asylum seeker background. A community sector worker commented:

‘Most persons on immediate arrival are sharing accommodation even though they need a place of their own…’ (community sector worker).

Newly arrived refugees and asylum seekers ineligible to government on-arrival assistance were reliant on personal networks to locate a community based response. Assistance was required for housing and income support and linkage into settlement and mainstream services.

3.1.1.3 Psychosocial Health

The restriction of settlement and reception entitlements increased health risks for refugees and asylum seekers. Risk factors to the psychosocial health of refugees and asylum seekers included restricted eligibility to permanent residency, family reunion and community based living (as opposed to living in detention). The visa conditions of TPV entrants and spouse entrants provide for temporary residence. To secure permanent residence subsequent applications are made 6 months prior to the visa expiry date. A community health worker described the circumstances of refugees without permanent residency:

‘They are experiencing post-traumatic stress, yet are continuing to experience that stress because they do not have permanence…’ (community health worker).

Service providers observed that impermanent residency had a negative impact on recovery from torture and trauma:

‘For progress [in dealing with torture and trauma] clients need safety… These feelings are impossible to reach when a person remains at risk of being deported…’ (community health worker).

TPV entrants and asylum seekers were ineligible for reunion with family. This group was likely to suffer trauma from family separation. A TPV entrant ineligible for reunion with his family explained:

‘This situation is not good. I can’t be without my family forever. I must help them. They continue to live with torture. If they are to die there then I would pray to be killed with them because I will feel responsible…’ (TPV entrant).

And an asylum seeker separated from his immediate family described his circumstances:

‘As a single person in Australia I ask myself how long can I survive away from my family. The stress is very great, I feel depressed…’ (asylum seeker).

Separation from family also caused distress when involvement in significant family life events was prevented.
The experience of immigration detention had a long-term negative impact on the health of some asylum seekers. A TPV entrant described his experience in relation to immigration detention in Australia:

‘In the detention centre I feel sick it was hard. [When I was released] slowly very slowly I improve....’ (TPV entrant)

Support workers reported clinical depression as a common health issue for refugees and asylum seekers, and particularly for TPV entrants who were detained as asylum seekers. Support workers observed that restricted eligibility to entitlements, contributed to emotional stress and increased risk of poor psychosocial health. Accumulation health issues over time increased this groups’ use of health services and reliance on income support due to difficulty obtaining suitable employment.

3.1.1.4 Health Services

The restriction of eligibility to health services increased the risk that refugees and asylum seekers health needs failed to be identified early. Unidentified health problems worsened over time and became more difficult to treat. For example, asylum seekers may be ineligible for a Medicare card and humanitarian visa categories may be ineligible to health programs targeted to recently arrived refugees (such as the ‘Early Health Assessment and Intervention’ program [IHSS]). Restricted eligibility to health assistance programs was associated with a short term reduction in utilisation of assistance. A community sector worker explained:

‘Without Medicare their health is at risk. For example one woman is four months pregnant and has not seen a doctor.’ (community sector worker).

Asylum seekers who were restricted eligibility to Medicare and experiencing financial difficulty relied on advocacy to access general health services. This group paid higher costs for health services compared to Medicare eligible persons. A community support worker explained:

‘It is very hard for people who have no money to also pay for medical things. Even if a child has asthma it is hard. Without Australian citizenship many must pay $70 for something which other citizens pay just $16...The cost of delivering a baby is massive as it is not covered by the government like it is for citizens. The cheapest I have heard of was $1000...’ (community support worker).

More generally, refugees and asylum seekers with low incomes were reported to have difficulty paying health costs. An asylum seeker ineligible to work or government income support, and, in receipt of the Asylum Seeker Project Living Assistance Payment commented:

‘This is a very low income and most of it is spent on public transport. I am struggling to buy hygienic things, just basic things. And medical expenses are very difficult...’ (asylum seeker).

Refugees and asylum seekers commonly loaned money to pay for health costs. A TPV entrant with shrapnel injuries explained:
For two and a half years I have been without my children and wife. I have been working 4 days in a row but then my health is no good and I must stop. I can’t afford to support my family overseas all I have from the Special Benefit is $300 per fortnight. It is hard enough covering my health costs. Health costs are a financial issue for me... The bill from using hospitals have been paid by borrowing money from friends...’ (TPV entrant).

The cost of accessing general and special health practitioners, hospital treatment and medication was difficult to afford for refugees and asylum seekers with low incomes. Support workers expressed concern that some asylum seekers experiencing financial hardship chose to go without other essentials to pay medical costs.

Difficulty accessing health services increased the risk that health needs failed to be identified early and health problems were compounded, increasing need and use of services in the long term. It was the consensus view of refugee and asylum seeker support workers that health costs contributed to financial difficulty for their clients.

3.1.1.5 English Language

English language tuition improved refugees and asylum seekers ability to communicate and engage in community life. A number of refugee and asylum seeker visa categories were restricted eligibility to free tuition services. For example, asylum seekers ineligible to the ASAS and spouse entrants awaiting a permanent visa were not eligible to free English tuition. TPV entrants had limited access to tuition compared to other refugee groups. A support worker described the negative implications of restricted eligibility to language tuition:

‘The language difficulties with English are uncomfortable and embarrassing. Many don’t access services because of this bad experience...’ (housing sector worker).

Language difficulties reduced utilisation of mainstream services by refugees and asylum seekers. Restricted eligibility to English tuition reduced opportunities to engage in community life, including development of broad social networks and prospects of finding suitable employment.

3.1.1.6 Income

The income of refugees and asylum seekers was limited by restricted eligibility to income entitlements. Work rights were denied to asylum seekers who applied for asylum 45 days or more after arriving in Australia. An asylum seeker without work rights described his circumstances:

‘I have no money to pay for transport. I must walk places. I can’t even pay for a met ticket...It is very hard because I can not afford to contact my family. We have a telephone in our house but we can’t use it...’ (asylum seeker).

Spouse entrants were restricted income support until they were granted a migrant or residence visa following the 2 year waiting period. The income support available to temporary protection
visa entrants accessing special benefit and asylum seekers accessing the ASAS payment was a lower payment compared to income support available to Australian residents. A support worker commented:

‘The Asylum Seeker Assistance Scheme payment is $136 per fortnight. This is not enough money...’ (support worker).

Denial of work rights and reduced income support compared to Australian residents limited refugees and asylum seekers capacity for financial independence and access to decent accommodation.

Fatima

Fatima, her husband and young sons currently have a Bridging Visa E. Their application for refugee status was under judicial review at the time of the interview. The family is ineligible to work or to any government assistance, including Medicare. Their young sons were born in Australia, however, were not allocated citizenship in Australia and are stateless. Before her family lost their work rights they lived in private rental accommodation.

‘We had a property when we lost our work rights. We must pay the bills so my husband worked. We had asked for assistance from services but we were not assisted...When my husband was caught working he was put in detention. I was very stressed because we could not simply get him out, we had to pay a large bond and every week he was in there he was charged about $164. My sons became very distressed, their lives were at risk. They were very fearful, especially of anyone with authority. They could not understand why their father was taken away. It was terrible. Still, when I think about it I feel terrible’.

‘At the moment my husband has nothing to do. He needs to be able to study or something like that’.

‘Before my husband worked we had asked for assistance, but we were not assisted. Then we get caught working and now they help us. We now have this unit for the long term. The place we are in feels like home’.

3.1.1.7 Training and Employment Assistance

The prospect of securing suitable employment and a livable income for refugees and asylum seekers was limited by restricted eligibility to training and employment services. TPV entrants and asylum seekers were subject to overseas student fee structures for tertiary education courses. A TPV entrant described his difficulty accessing tertiary education:

‘I would like to do further education in Australia. But it is hard because... I must pay for fees upfront, and these are very high...’ (TPV entrant).
Eligibility to employment assistance is denied to TPV entrants and asylum seekers, except for the most basic services, such as touch screen job matching. A TPV entrant commented:

'Sometimes I don't get work. I want to work but I can't get assistance from Centrelink...' (TPV entrant).

Further, refugees and asylum seekers may not have time available to look for work, especially those with carer responsibilities:

'It is an issue for my clients that they have to care for their young ones at home and can't look for work. They don't have childcare for the young ones, except maybe for 2-3 hours per week when they go to English classes...' (community sector worker).

The gaps in available training and employment assistance had a negative impact on the employment opportunities of this group and limited capacity for financial independence and stability in the long term.

Akbar

'I have to have a house that is not permanent in case my job changes and it is important that it is located in this area. I need to be permanently here in Australia. I would like to be here and have a good life with my wife and children.'

Akbar has a Temporary Protection Visa. He is ineligible to permanent protection, family reunion and government employment assistance. He has been living in Australia for four and a half years.

'When I came to Australia I sold property. I used US$8000 to come to Australia. I still have debt from loaning money from friends. In the detention centre I feel sick it was hard. Slowly, very slowly I improved. Now I have a license for driving a car.'

'Sometimes I don't get work. I want to work but I can't get assistance from Centrelink. I must support family members overseas. I have not seen my family for five years. I still have mental stress about this.'

3.1.1.8 Housing

Housing assistance available to Australian residents is restricted from specific refugee and asylum seeker visa groups. Victorian Office of Housing regulations restrict TPV entrants and asylum seekers from accessing public housing. A community sector worker described the circumstances of TPV entrants:

'Those TPV's who have accessed public housing via informal channels are stable. However TPV's without public housing are not so stable and need more intensive housing assistance. This group often in the end move out to Dandenong where
Large families eligible for public housing were excluded from this tenure due to scarcity of large properties. The Supported Accommodation Assistance Program (SAAP), Victoria’s primary crisis housing response and the Transitional Housing Management Program (THMP), the medium term housing assistance program may provide assistance to some TPV entrants and asylum seekers. It was evident that conflicting direction has been given by the Commonwealth and State Governments to services regarding eligibility for specific refugee and asylum seeker visa categories. Therefore, housing assistance service eligibility policies vary. Housing assistance services may accept refugee and asylum seeker clients, however restrict entry after a quota is filled:

“For each of our programs the Housing Service pays for an asylum seeker to have a place…” (housing sector worker).

Other services reject refugees and asylum seekers in need of housing assistance on the basis of their visa category or visa conditions. However, THM Guidelines (2003/2004) recommended that refugees and asylum seekers are to be ‘assessed for eligibility on the basis of their immediate need for housing and other types of assistance.” Support workers observed that restricted eligibility to housing assistance increased the risk of housing crisis and homelessness. In the long-term, the accumulation of housing issues increased refugees and asylum seekers use of housing services.

Hussein

“For two and a half years I have been without my children and wife. When I left Afghanistan I sold my shop to pay for the trip. I sold everything. Relatives call me now because they need money, but I have none. I can’t afford to support my family overseas. It is hard enough covering my health costs’.

Hussein has a temporary protection visa. Even though he has been recognised by the Australian Government as a refugee he was not eligible for permanent protection in Australia. Also, Hussein is ineligible to family reunion and most settlement support programs.

Hussein is eligible to work, however, due to injuries from shrapnel he is unable to work consistent hours. Even powerful painkillers do not permit Hussein to work. Hussein’s GP prescribes him a number of medicines for daily use. The cost of these account for a significant proportion of his budget.

“They looked inside me twice but in the end decided that they would not operate on me. I would like this operation though. I think I need an operation. At the moment I find it hard to work every day as the pain prevents me from working. A little while ago I worked 4 days, but I had to stop because the pain was too much’.

‘It is hard on my health where I am staying now because I am in the lounge room and often I will be woken up by other people or by the pain’.

‘I sleep in the lounge room. I have no bed, and I keep my stuff in my car. I generally stay in one place no more than 2 nights. In my culture this is the way it is’.

‘I had no place to sleep for a little while. I didn’t know where to go to get help. I drove to the country and stayed in the forest there for a little while’.

‘I was offered short-term accommodation [by a housing service], but it was too hard for me to get to places like the doctors, language classes and shops, especially Halal food. But now I can’t pay the rent and I am not comfortable in my accommodation’.

‘I don’t mind where I live. Where ever there is a good life I will go there. I need a place for my family, I need to be with them. It is not so good the situation now’.

3.1.9 Summary

Visa conditions restricted eligibility to numerous entitlements for humanitarian entrants, TPV entrants, spouse entrants and asylum seekers. A range of services and rights of key importance to settlement processes were restricted, including; travel to Australia and medical check payment assistance, on-arrival income and accommodation support, on-arrival information and orientation assistance, permanent protection, family reunion rights, English language tuition and settlement case work support. Mainstream services available to Australian residents and restricted from a number of visa categories included: housing, health, employment and education services. Entitlement restrictions made refugees and asylum seekers reliant on a fragmented community based response to their needs. These community based services more often than not were under resourced to meet settlement needs and had difficulty dealing with the obscure legal status of this group. The restriction of entitlements increased the risk that available assistance failed to identify or address the needs of this group. Refugees and asylum seekers who were restricted entitlements were more likely to accumulate personal issues over time and subsequently had increased vulnerability to housing crisis.
3.1.2 Cultural and Language Barriers

The visa conditions of some refugees and asylum seekers restricted access to settlement and reception support. Visa categories with restricted entitlements included: humanitarian entrants, TPV entrants, asylum seekers, spouse entrants and New Zealand refugee arrivers. These groups were reliant on a range of fragmented and often generalist community based services for settlement assistance. Significant inefficiency in this service system was observed. The following section outlines cultural and language difficulties faced by refugees and asylum seekers and examines the flow on effect to housing crisis vulnerability.

3.1.2.1 Cultural Information

Refugees entering under the offshore refugee entrant program are eligible to settlement case work support under the Integrated Humanitarian Settlement Strategy (IHSS). This group were provided centralised and specialist on-arrival support. However, refugees and asylum seekers entering under different DIMIA programs relied on a fragmented community based response. This response included a range of mainstream community services, primary assistance services and informal assistance from community members. Effective housing assistance was contingent on responsiveness of professional and community supports to the needs of this group. For example, refugees and asylum seekers backgrounds, such as torture and trauma experiences, culture and visa status. Generalist providers had difficulty responding to the complex and special needs of refugees and asylum seekers. Restricted access to specialist services increased the risk that these people would be provided incorrect advice and service referrals.

Arriving in Australia refugees and asylum seekers often face an entirely new environment. A community sector worker explained the position of a newly arrived refugee or asylum seeker:

‘Arrival in Australia is a monumental change...If someone is from a camp in Africa they are coming from a very dangerous environment...Australia looks glittery. People often have a false idea about the government...It is difficult to understand the system...’ (community sector worker).

Refugees and asylum seekers commonly had difficulty understanding the system of government in Australia. A community sector worker described the circumstances of a particular group of recent arrivals:

‘In this area you have a lot of recent arrivals and many single men in 2 bedroom flats with 11 to 12 residents. Their housing is temporary and their awareness of services available to them is low. This low understanding is linked to their background where the country’s welfare system is far smaller than in Australia. The Centrelink benefits are initially a surprise...’ (community sector worker).

Access to appropriate assistance was reduced by difficulty obtaining information explaining the Australian system.

Poor information flow between service sectors reduced the responsiveness of housing assistance services to the special needs of refugees and asylum seekers. A key concern of specialist support
workers was the regular provision of incorrect information about visa conditions by mainstream services. For example, clients were incorrectly advised by mainstream services to find work or were advised incorrectly that after a wait period they would be eligible to government services. A support worker described the situation:

'Mainstream support workers who are new can provide misinformation. For example, my clients were misinformed that they [New Zealand Refugees living in Australia] will have payments from Centrelink within two years.' (housing support worker).

Secondly, a number of support workers reported that mainstream services demonstrated a poor knowledge of appropriate referrals for refugee and asylum seeker clients. For example, there were a number of reports of asylum seekers assisted by mainstream services that had not been referred to the Red Cross ASAS program and other free services. A housing support worker of refugees and asylum seekers commented:

'We are frustrated with the misunderstanding in the sector. The new worker, the gap in government or agencies policies. Sectors are not collaborating. Nobody is filling the gap, they just fall through it...' (housing support worker).

The complexity of the refugee and asylum seeker client group requires housing assistance workers to acquire knowledge about client cultural backgrounds, torture and trauma backgrounds, visa status and appropriate referral services.

Mohamed

'It is my responsibility to support my family. You see in my home country the women can do nothing. I must support my young bothers and sisters. They are very young and need my help. I would not have left unless I had no choice'.

'I have many problems, many, many problems. I am alone in Australia, but in Afghanistan a fiancé waits for me. I don't know if she will wait. I have aged and my life is short. Now I have a Temporary Protection Visa for five years. Yet the UNHR commission has recognised me as a refugee why can I not be joined by my family? Other people who were also at Naru who went to Sweden, Germany and New Zealand are now living with their family. Why can't we?'

Mohamed has a Temporary Protection Visa. He arrived in Australia one month ago and has recently arranged private rental accommodation with his two friends. He is twenty-six years old.

'When we left our first house in Australia we had no idea where to go. We asked a man from our home country for help. He asked me where I grew up. When he knew this he was able to find someone from my village. When I met this man I recognised him. I think my father new him. We went to live with him in his house for one week'.

'Through friends we heard about the service. When a taxi was sent for us to go to meet them we went straight away. They arranged for us to stay at a hotel in the city for one week and when that time was gone it was arranged that we stay in a hotel in this area. I had been looking for private rental accommodation during that time. I was able to work out the system. You get the
We are looking for jobs in the newspaper. The service helped us with a resume. We have applied for many jobs, but they never call. They want us to have a licence and transport.

'If we had a problem I don't know where I would go to get help now. Before we came here we were helped by a service, but they are too far away now'.

'Staying with my friends is very important. Originally there were six of us but now there is just three. One went to South Australia to work on a farm. He really wanted to work. However, it did not work out they were not paying him. Now we hear that he has returned to Melbourne and we are hoping that he will come back and stay with us'.

3.1.2.2 Tenant Rights

Newly arrived refugees and asylum seekers were unfamiliar with the rights of rental tenants in Australia. This group was vulnerable to discrimination in the rental market, including difficulty securing tenancy and maintaining their rights as a tenant. Successive rejection of rental applications was experienced by a range of refugee and asylum seeker households however, large families were reported to be most at risk. Tenant rights were commonly infringed by; excessive rent charges, poor maintenance responses and renting of derelict properties. A Dandenong resident commented when asked about if she had difficulties finding appropriate housing:

'It is very difficult. The [real estate] agent sometimes give a very bad house to new asylum seekers. A couple I know on a temporary protection visa, the house is old and it has no garage. They charge them $200 a week which is $20 more than what we pay for this nice house...they take advantage of them. Especially them...’
(humanitarian entrant).

A service provider commented:

'These people are exploited by private landlords. They ask for too much rent, and the rights of the tenants are not met...' (community sector worker).

Refugees and asylum seekers renting informally were most vulnerable to housing crisis. For example, an informal tenant living in the Dandenong area, with a weekly income of $150 described his circumstances:
I must use too much of my income to pay rent. Often I pay between $80 and $100 rent per week... I sleep in the lounge room. I have no bed, and I keep my stuff in my car...’ (refugee with Special Benefit).

Single mothers, who may have had little experience in public affairs in their country of origin were more vulnerable to discriminating landlords relative to other household groups. A support worker explained:

'Single mothers are most commonly discriminated against, which is linked to their lower confidence and knowledge of public affairs, like renting a home. These households are from a background of support from extended family, however in Australia they are isolated...’ (support worker).

Support providers and clients reported difficulty utilising tenancy advocates to address discrimination cases in the private rental market. It was the consensus view of service providers that refugees and asylum seekers were at risk of discrimination in the private rental market because of tenants low knowledge of their rights and unfair stereotyping or prejudice by real estate agents and landlords.

3.1.2.3 Migration Agents

Service providers reported concern about the standard of professional conduct of some migration agents. Some migration agents were reported to charge excessive fees and provide poor legal advice regarding the likelihood that an asylum seeker would be granted a protection visa. A support worker to asylum seekers reported about his client group:

'They are vulnerable to bad advice especially from migration agents... I know of four people who spent more than $100,000 between them on migration agents yet got no permanent visa. And all the migration agent does is fill out a form. But the asylum seeker does not know that. They are told that chance one is going to cost $5000, chance two the same and so on. Many of these clients the support worker would say that they have little chance of success...’ (community sector worker).

Fees for legal assistance for some migration agents were reported to be excessive. A community sector worker reported:

'Every time clients meet their migration agent they are charged $500. One person was charged $500 for signing a change of address form. They did not understand English but they believed that it was an important form because it had a DIMIA letter head...’ (community sector worker).

Refugees and asylum seekers who paid for legal assistance were likely to loan money to pay costs if their personal resources were exhausted. Refugees and asylum seekers were at risk of exploitation and debt accumulation when obtaining legal assistance for their protection visa application.
3.1.2.4 Demographic Support Infrastructure in Australia

Community support in home country communities was not available in Australia. The demographic make up of refugee ethnic communities in Australia is different to home countries. For example, the South Sudanese community traditionally relies on the older generation for support. However, in Australia the refugee community is a young demographic. This stretches community supports, for example for childcare and advice. A community sector worker reported:

*The Sudanese community is very young...most of the older ones are 40 to 45 years of age. Community leaders miss their elders. They can't turn to someone for advice. Also, this impacts on childcare arrangements, the demographic infrastructure is not there. How do carers for children access English classes?...’ (community sector worker)*

Coping with community support needs was a struggle for emerging ethnic communities.

3.1.2.5 Family Cultural Conflict

Varying engagement with Australian mainstream culture for family members increased the risk of family breakdown. There was a risk that inter-generational cultural tensions would develop between parents and children. Children eligible for primary and secondary education commonly ‘fitted in’ with Australian culture quickly. On the other hand, parents often stayed home with little English or education and find the transition more challenging:

*The children are eager to learn English quickly and fit in quickly. On the other hand mothers stay home to look after the children and have little education and no English. This sets the family up for conflict. This leads to the teenagers leaving home early...’ (community sector worker)*

Provision of access to English language tuition, carer support and employment services appeared to increase the opportunity for carers to engage in community life and reduced inter-generational conflict. Families were also vulnerable to gender conflicts due to large differences in gender roles between their country of origin and Australia. Pressure from cultural differences made youth vulnerable to leaving home early and relationships vulnerable to breakdown.

3.1.2.6 Language Barriers

Limited English language skills presented barriers to refugees and asylum seekers' resettlement in Australia. Language difficulties reduced refugees and asylum seekers use of mainstream services. Insufficient access to English language tuition appeared to reduce refugees and asylum seekers prospects of finding suitable employment. Support workers reported that women’s language skills generally develop at a slower rate than their male counterparts, impacting on women’s confidence and skill development.

Difficulties accessing services were associated with use of interpreters. Support workers and clients reported under-utilisation of interpreters by mainstream services. Further, there was a risk
that the interpreter would be inappropriate for the client. For example, there was a risk that there would be a conflicting political relationship between or within the cultural group of the client and interpreter. In other circumstances, the interpreter requested may not provide services for the specific dialect of the client. Finally, due to the small size of refugee and asylum seeker language communities, there was an increased likelihood that private information would be disclosed to an interpreter that is personally known to the client. A support worker explained:

“There is a fear on the part of the client that the information that the interpreter is getting will get into the community. The community is so open and they don’t want their case recognised…” (housing worker).

Disclosure of information relevant to support was limited by language barriers, which increased refugees and asylum seekers difficulty accessing services and obtaining suitable assistance.

Research has linked English language proficiency and use of income support. Research undertaken by Birrell and Jupp\(^\text{18}\) found that overseas born persons showed slightly lower welfare-recipient rates than their Australia-born counterparts. However, welfare recipient rates for persons classified in low English proficiency groups (EP3, EP4) were higher than their Australian-born counterparts. Further the research of Birrell and Jupp identified women as higher welfare recipients than men across all English proficiency groups.\(^\text{19}\) Restricted eligibility to English classes and appropriate support to carers increases welfare dependency. In the long-term it is likely to be more cost effective to provide access to English classes.

3.1.2.7 Summary

Government funding arrangements for settlement and reception services excluded some refugee and asylum seeker visa categories. Service provision for these groups was effectively shifted to a fragmented and often generalist community based response. Refugees and asylum seekers accessing such assistance had difficulty obtaining appropriate support. Settlement difficulties on presentation to housing assistance services were associated with tenant rights, migration agents, family cultural conflict and language barriers. Poor information flow between primary and housing assistance service sectors reduced the responsiveness of housing assistance services to the special needs of refugees and asylum seekers. For example, refugees and asylum seekers were provided misinformation from housing assistance services. Housing assistance options for refugees and asylum seekers appeared to be under-resourced to sufficiently respond to the extent of need of this group.

Refugees and asylum seekers face a steep learning curve when they arrive in Australia. Restricted access to settlement casework support increased the risk that settlement needs were not addressed or went undetected. This exacerbated existing cultural and language difficulties in the long term. Service utilisation patterns highlighted that settlement and reception service provision was often fragmented, under-resourced and inappropriate. There appeared to be a mismatch between the needs of refugees and asylum seekers and available assistance. The response denied early intervention to settlement and housing difficulties. The primary response was to housing crisis. A centralised and specialist settlement or reception assistance program targeting early arrivals would be a more efficient response to this groups’ cultural and language difficulties.


\(^{19}\) ibid.
3.1.3 Housing Barriers

The torture and trauma background of the refugee and asylum seeker client group presents a primary need for housing that provides a basic sense of safety. A community support worker emphasised that ‘safe’ accommodation was needed before assistance with other issues was possible:

‘It is a priority getting people a place to live. Without housing they are not safe. They do not feel safe enough to deal with their issues. Without housing settled we can not refer clients to other organisations to deal with their other issues. For example, IT courses and English courses. These people are so traumatised they need a basic sense of physical safety, this is what secure accommodation provides...’ (community support worker).

Barriers to obtaining suitable accommodation included: vulnerability to discrimination in the rental market and specific housing needs for scarce private and public rental housing.

3.1.3.1 Private Rental

The private rental market failed to provide refugees and asylum seekers access to affordable and securely tenured accommodation. Access to private rental accommodation was a short-term solution to this groups’ housing difficulties. In the long-term private rental tenure was insecure. A community support worker explained:

‘For my clients private rental accommodation is not a solution, in the short term it is, but in the long term my clients get into other problems. For example, they may not be able to pay the rent or if something expensive is damaged they can not deal with the financial emergency. Further, the tenancy is not secure, the landlord may refuse tenancy renewal for my clients and yes this does happen to my clients...’ (community support worker).

Refugee and asylum seeker groups with settlement difficulties were reported by support workers to have difficulty affording private market rents from week to week. Support workers reported that it was common among their clients for two families to share one house to increase housing affordability:

You often have a situation where families are so poor two families will live together. This is for long periods of time and they still can’t pay the rent...’ (community sector worker).

Overcrowded accommodation increased the risk that tenancy renewal would be refused.

Accommodation options in the private rental market varied by household type. Single person households had severely limited affordable housing options. Options included rooming house style accommodation and share housing. This accommodation was often inappropriate housing for persons with a history of torture and trauma. Support workers reported that in the long-term inappropriate tenancies impacted on resettlement, torture and trauma recovery and capacity to
work. The majority of refugee and asylum seeker clients relied on the private rental market for accommodation. Service providers indicated that if people experienced settlement difficulties public rental was a more appropriate tenure.

3.1.3.2 Public Rental

Support workers reported a poor match of the needs of refugees and asylum seekers with public housing infrastructure and assessment processes. There was limited availability of suitably sized public housing stock for large families. Large families had an increased risk that their housing application would be rejected because an appropriate sized property was not currently available. A support worker explained:

‘Transitional housing is very hard to find. There is great competition, and size of property factors play a part in restricting access for our clients...’ (community sector worker).

In some cases one family may be split across two properties, however this arrangement was not culturally appropriate for some clients. A support worker commented:

‘If there is a public housing request for a large family often that sized property is not available so they split the family between houses. This does not work well with some refugees’ traditions. For example, there may be a culture of the man who is eldest in the dwelling being responsible for the family. This is difficult for the eldest son...’ (community sector worker).

Splitting large families across more than one house structure and accommodation without a separate sitting room for the male and female is culturally inappropriate for some refugee and asylum seeker cultural backgrounds. The provision of culturally inappropriate housing was deeply offensive and increased the risk of family tension. Accommodation design features were an important consideration for the assessment of torture and trauma health needs. A community sector worker described the experience of her client:

‘A woman was provided public housing in a city area that was nice. It was reasonable accommodation in appearance. She walked in and said no I cannot live here. This needs to be unpacked. The rooms were small, dark with tall ceilings and there was no light fittings on the lights. This reminded her of her place of torture, which was for a period of 5 years. Office of Housing put her on the bottom of the list not asking why the accommodation was inappropriate...’ (community sector worker).

Some refugees rejected public housing tenancy offers because they did not feel safe living in the offered properties. Refugees accessing public housing had less choice about the area and type of housing they live in, compared to private rental housing. It appeared that assessment processes among housing assistance services made limited assessment of information about refugee and asylum seeker clients’ health, cultural and settlement needs. In some cases varied local management practices throughout the public and community housing sectors were not reflective of program policy, increasing the risk that refugees and asylum seekers were subject to
negative experiences. While many refugee and asylum seeker clients relied on the private rental market, support workers indicated that in most cases the affordability and security of tenure offered by public rental, makes it a more appropriate tenancy.

3.1.3.3 Ongoing Arrival Accommodation

Offshore refugee entrants were the only visa category eligible to on-arrival settlement housing provided under DIMIA’s Ongoing Arrival Accommodation (OAA) Program. Support workers reported that OAA housing was inappropriately designed and located for the current client intake. A community sector worker reported:

‘Refugee housing is a priority issue particularly for larger family units. Australia is not prepared to provide housing for this family type. For example, there are many families of 8-10 children when the stock in the on-arrival DIMIA funded flats are mostly 2 bedroom.’ (community sector worker).

The length of accommodation support periods in OAA housing was reported to fall short of the needs of offshore refugee entrants. A community sector worker commented:

‘You see four weeks is too short. It is a massive task that must be done in this period. DIMIA could do more than what it is doing now. The duration of stay is too tight. People are ending up paying for accommodation. Government should subsidise this completely. They need to stay for 3 months. They need furniture help and help to get financial strength...’ (community sector worker).

In some cases accommodation shortages for the OAA program restricted assistance from offshore refugee entrants. The withdrawal of OAA assistance after 4 weeks appeared to disrupt the settlement process. A worker commented:

‘Departmental housing access is funded for 4 weeks. The Integrated Humanitarian Settlement Scheme [IHSS] funds housing workers to get people out of that accommodation. This is disruptive during the early stages of settlement. Often people are forced to move to a new area because, for example, the rents in Maribyrnong are too expensive. After leaving the initial area some people commute back to this area...’ (community sector worker).

The rents in the area surrounding OAA program accommodation were difficult to afford for some recently arrived refugee entrants. Support workers reported that rather than entering the private rental market some entrants stay on in OAA housing, and get into debt paying rent. A community sector worker described the circumstances of her clients:

‘Accommodation is a nightmare. They can’t afford rental accommodation alone and it is inappropriate to share housing. Further public housing is not available. They are obliged to stay in on-arrival accommodation when they arrive and pay rent after the initial free period and get into debt...’ (community sector worker).
Refugee entrants exiting OAA housing either paid high rent in the initial settlement locality and experienced housing stress or moved to a new area with cheaper living costs where they were unfamiliar with services and amenities.

3.1.3.4 Summary

The torture and trauma background of refugees and asylum seekers presents a primary need for housing that provides a basic sense of safety. However, the inadequacies of available private and public housing stock and entry processes presented barriers to accessing appropriate housing. This stalled refugees and asylum seekers resettlement progress and recovery from torture and trauma. The private rental market offered refugees and asylum seekers a degree of housing choice, however housing affordability and security of tenancy was limited. On the other hand, limited eligibility, inappropriately sized accommodation and inflexible client need assessments reduced refugees and asylum seekers prospects of securing suitable public housing or OAA Program housing. Tenure of public housing was preferential for refugees and asylum seekers with long-term settlement difficulties. Public housing offered tenants greater affordability and tenure security compared to the private rental market. Refugees and asylum seekers needed housing to provide them a basic sense of safety, without safe housing dealing with personal issues was put on hold, disrupting the settlement process.
3.2 Issues

Financial difficulty, social isolation, emotional stress and employment difficulties were key issues for refugees and asylum seekers experiencing housing crisis and homelessness. Restricted access to settlement and reception entitlements increased the risk that the above listed personal issues failed to be addressed or went undetected by support services. This exacerbated existing settlement and reception difficulties and could lead to housing crisis. Specific pathways into housing crisis experienced by refugees and asylum seekers included; loss of entitlement to income; breakdown of proposer and arriver relationship; social isolation from community and service support networks; health, language, training and qualification related employment barriers and community service sector demand overload. The following section examines the impact of the circumstances of this group in the short and long term.

3.2.1 Financial Difficulty

Financial difficulties for refugees and asylum seekers were associated with a range of circumstances. In the short-term refugees and asylum seekers were at risk of debt accumulation and restricted access to income. Debt was commonly accumulated from costs for arrival travel, on-arrival set-up and legal assistance. Community sector workers identified loss of entitlement to income support and work as a cause of homelessness. A community sector worker explained:

‘Homelessness is caused by loss of income as a result of a negative decision [on their protection visa] after the initial application [to DIMIA and the RRT]. These clients lose their work rights or their welfare payments and are unable to pay for housing. They become homeless... ’ (community sector worker).

An asylum seeker described their forced exit from the private rental market after loosing the right to work:

‘We had private rental when we had work rights. We were sharing a two bedroom unit with another couple. When our work rights were cancelled we had to say sorry but we can’t stay... ‘ (asylum seeker).

Refugees and asylum seekers with restricted access to income needed a change to their visa to maintain or obtain independent housing. A community sector worker explained:

‘The exit option for this client group [asylum seekers with no access to Medicare, income support or the right to work] is a permanent protection visa... ’ (community sector worker).

In the long-term refugees and asylum seekers were at risk of financial difficulty due to debt accumulation and employment difficulties. Debt accumulation in the long-term was associated with high health costs and residence of OAA housing after the 4-week free rent cut off point. Difficulties with employment were commonly health and skill related. Health difficulties were commonly associated with torture and trauma experiences. Health difficulties associated with pre-arrival experiences were compounded by post-arrival experiences. For example, temporary protection, separation from family and detention. Secondly, barriers to suitable employment
included restricted eligibility to English tuition, training and employment assistance. The precarious finances of some refugees and asylum seekers made dealing with financial emergencies difficult.

Indika

‘Sometimes me and some friends who are asylum seekers wonder if it would be better to be in the detention centres because in the community we are always wondering where and when we will get our food and accommodation from.’

Indika has recently arrived in Australia and awaits finalisation of his application for refugee status by DIMIA. He has a Bridging Visa A, however is ineligible to work and can not access government assistance. He may be eligible to support from the Asylum Seeker Assistance Scheme six months after his application was lodged. He has been separated from his wife and two children while he awaits the finalisation of his application.

‘I can not pay a fee for accommodation because I have no funds. I have had to stay in many places before I came here. When I was finding help I called a housing service near where I was staying, then another service and then this one. This took all day. The reasons people give for not being able to help are that I am not an Australian citizen and my VISA does not allow me to work. I think that people do not want to understand the situation of an asylum seeker, this makes it hard for us.’

‘As a single person in Australia I ask myself how long can I survive away from my family. The stress is great. I feel depressed. I try to feel happiness and to make friends, but this is a challenge.’

‘The media in Australia does not support refugees. This encourages people to misunderstand refugees. I even find that people who work for this service do not always understand my situation with the VISA. They don’t know that I cannot work... And once at this service I was asked for my Centrelink details, people don’t understand that I don’t get Centrelink benefits.’

‘I get very depressed sometimes because I have no worker rights to keep me busy. It would be easier if I had work rights... The food voucher system is not so good. When you go to buy the food the people look at you differently when you give them the food voucher to pay... People look at you in a bad way. It makes us look like we are lazy... The treatment is very humiliating.’

3.2.2 Social Isolation

Social isolation substantially reduced support available to refugees and asylum seekers, whether from personal or professional support networks. Social isolation was either self asserted or asserted by immediate support networks. Refugees and asylum seekers self isolation was associated with feelings of shame for being destitute, pre-arrival experiences (rape, inability to assist dependents) and limited capacity to socially participate due to low income and poor English. It was the consensus view of support workers that self-asserted isolation was associated
with restricted settlement and reception entitlements. For example, a support worker reported difficulty in assisting clients with no income:

"The people with no income it is a big thing for them, it encourages isolation. We tried to address this by linking the mother into a sewing class. It was paid for by us and she enjoyed it. It gave her something to think about and do. But by the time second term had come around she had self excluded herself. She could not talk about the every day things that people talk about in small groups at those classes. And she did not continue with the class..." (housing worker).

On the other hand, isolation asserted by immediate support networks was associated with social stigma from a break with cultural conventions for example, family breakdown. Women were most vulnerable to social isolation as they are most likely to be culturally unsupported victims of domestic violence and inter-gender cultural conflict. Young persons were especially vulnerable to homelessness in circumstances of intergenerational cultural conflict. Refugees and asylum seekers may be isolated from community support following demand overload for community assistance. For example, in the case that large numbers of new arrivals present to the community at once there is not the flexibility in resources required to address the quantity of demand. Demand overload for community assistance may also contribute to the breakdown of proposer and arriver support relationships. Social isolation commonly resulted in long-term withdrawal of community and service support.

Shabnam

"When I was sick with a tooth ache it was a big problem because when you go for service the first thing they ask for is a Medicare card. I don't have one. So I couldn't go to a dentist.'

Shabnam has been living in Australia for five years. He is ineligible to Medicare and other government services. He is unable to pay for healthcare because the 45 day rule prevents his access to income. This rule restricts the right to work and access to the Asylum Seeker Assistance Scheme from persons who reside in Australia for 45 days or more before their Protection Visa application is lodged.

"When I came I had to get out and I came to any place I could get a visa... I was on a tourist visa and then on a student visa. I did not know I could apply to be a refugee. I was studying during the day and working at night. It was very hard to pay the rent and my student fees'.

'Before I came to this service I was homeless for three weeks. You see it is hard owing money even when you have a good friend that you stay with. You can't stay there without paying the rent. Some people think I have the dole, they don't believe that I don't have the dole or that I have no money'.

'Help from the service is much appreciated. I am against the government policy. Even if they let us work 20 hours that would make a real difference. You see you can ask someone for assistance once but to ask again and again you cannot do this. Sometimes I go hungry because I am shy to ask for help. It is hard to explain. In the accommodation at this service I am very much at home. It is the only place I have'.
3.2.3 Emotional Stress

Pre-arrival and post-arrival experiences contributed to emotional stress for refugees and asylum seekers. Pre-arrival refugees and asylum seekers may have experienced torture and trauma. However, emotional stress and trauma was also associated with experiences in Australia. Specifically, many asylum seekers wait a period of many months before being granted permanent protection and during this period may have a limited ability to support ones self and family. Refugees and asylum seekers separated from family may be unable to participate in significant family life events. Asylum seekers detained while their protection visa is processed commonly accumulated emotional stress from this experience. TPV entrants and asylum seekers were unable to be reunited with family and were stressed by this. The impact of the immigration policy to detain asylum seekers was illustrated by a TPV entrants' account of their experiences:

‘In the detention centre I feel sick it was hard. Slowly very slowly I improve...’ (TPV entrant).

Another TPV entrant said:

‘I have many problems, many many problems...Two years before I left my father left as a refugee also. It is my responsibility to support my family. You see in my home country the women can do nothing to support themselves financially. I must support my young bothers and sisters. They are very young and need my help... I am alone in Australia, but in my home country a fiancé waits for me. I don't know if she will wait. I have aged and my life is short. Now I have a temporary protection Visa for five years. Yet the UNHR commission has recognised me as a refugee why can I not be joined by my family. Other people who were also in detention who went to Sweden, Germany and New Zealand are now living with their family. Why can't we?.’ (TPV entrant).

An asylum seeker accounted her experience waiting for a protection visa when asked if she had special needs:

‘Trauma, I am scared for my sons. When my husband was caught working he was put in detention. I was very stressed because we could not simply get him out we had to pay a large bond and every week he was in there he is charged about $160. My sons also became very distressed, their lives were at risk. They were very fearful, especially of anyone with authority. They could not understand why their father was taken away. It was terrible. Still when I think about it I feel terrible...' (asylum seeker).

Support workers reported that many of their asylum seeker clients were unable to pay for recreation and other general goods and services. A housing sector worker described the experience of their client:

‘They are unable to have certainty. This limits the kind of service we can provide. We can't link them into community. For example, one child went from primary to high school last year so to get access to a high school was a big challenge. Documents went missing for the child to get into the state school but in the end
she got in. The fear is so great that this enrolment will be lost. They feel this as an ongoing persecution. They feel an ongoing fear in Australia. Fear that they will not be able to support for their family.’ (housing sector worker).

Awaiting permanent protection asylum seekers were reported by support workers to face depression, anxiety, despair and hopelessness. Support workers reported that the risk of deportation denied asylum seekers and TPV entrants feelings of safety and delayed future settlement progress. Emotional stress may be linked to pre-migration experiences of torture and trauma, however, more often than not it was also associated with experiences in Australia.

3.2.4 Employment Difficulties

The work opportunities of refugees and asylum seekers were limited by restricted eligibility to work and government assistance. Visa category conditions may restrict access to work rights and training, employment and carer assistance. Households with a spouse entrant ineligible to government assistance lived on a single income until a permanent visa was granted. Spouse entrants that rely on partners for income were reported to experience financial difficulty in the circumstance of job loss or family breakdown. New Zealand refugee arrivals in recipient of income support relied on parenting payments. This caused increased housing stress as children aged and became ineligible to the payment. Assistance to refugees and asylum seekers to prepare for work in Australia appeared to be under-resourced. Visa conditions and service system gaps limited refugees and asylum seekers opportunities of finding suitable employment and capacity for financial independence. Difficulties obtaining suitable employment and income contributed to refugees and asylum seekers vulnerability to housing crisis.

3.2.5 Summary

Restricted eligibility to entitlements and cultural and language barriers were key circumstances identified as generators of financial hardship, social isolation, emotional stress and employment difficulties among refugees and asylum seekers. These issues were generated following arrival in Australia. Social isolation resulted in long-term withdrawal of community and service support, and left no safety net to prevent homelessness or to address housing issues. Emotional stress may be linked to pre-migration experiences of torture and trauma, however, more often than not it was also associated with experiences in Australia. The precarious finances of some refugees and asylum seekers made paying rent from week to week and dealing with financial emergencies difficult. The accumulation of personal issues increased the risk of housing crisis and was a feature of a disrupted settlement process.
3.3 Discussion

The Commonwealths' restriction of eligibility to entitlements, settlement barriers and housing market and service system failure were key circumstances associated with the generation of greater vulnerability to housing crisis for refugees and asylum seekers. Housing crisis vulnerability factors included: financial and employment difficulty, social isolation and emotional stress. Table 3.3.1 provides an overview of circumstances and issues, which contributed to refugees and asylum seekers vulnerability to housing crisis.

The torture and trauma background of refugees and asylum seekers presented a primary need for housing that provides a basic sense of safety. However, the inadequacies of available private and public housing stock and entry processes presented barriers to accessing appropriate housing. Housing difficulties stalled settlement and recovery from torture and trauma. The private rental market offered refugees and asylum seekers a degree of housing choice. However, tenure of public housing was preferential for refugees and asylum seekers with settlement difficulties as it offered tenants greater affordability and tenure security compared to the private rental market.

Pathways into housing crisis for refugees and asylum seekers were associated with the accumulation of personal issues in the context of entitlement restrictions and an under-resourced and fragmented service safety net. The disruption of settlement processes caused by entitlement restrictions increased vulnerability to housing crisis. Entitlement restrictions prevented access to a range of services and rights that are key to the settlement process. This included; housing, health, language and employment. There appeared to be a mismatch between the needs of refugees and asylum seekers and the available service response. The response did not provide for early intervention to settlement and housing difficulties and primarily responded to housing crisis.

Significant government service gaps for specific visa categories made some refugees and asylum seekers reliant on a fragmented, under-resourced and inappropriate response to their settlement needs. This increased the risk that housing assistance needs failed to be identified or addressed. Subsequently, overtime housing difficulties were exacerbated, and the risk of long-term welfare dependency increased. The absence of a coordinated settlement response for specific visa category groups compounded housing difficulties and increased the risk of housing crisis and homelessness.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Circumstance</th>
<th>Housing Crisis Vulnerability Factor</th>
<th>Housing Stress Outcome</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Restricted Assistance with Travel Costs to Australia</td>
<td>• Risk of financial debt</td>
<td>• Inability to deal with financial crisis</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Long-term financial debt</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Emotional stress associated with reduced capacity to financially support dependents.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Restricted Eligibility to On-arrival Accommodation and Income Support</td>
<td>• Reliance on community support for accommodation, income support and linkage to settlement and mainstream services.</td>
<td>• Inability to provide for and financially support self and dependents.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Disrupted settlement progress.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Restricted Eligibility to Health Entitlements</td>
<td>• Reduced access of timely health assistance and compromised long term psychosocial and physical health by detention while protection visa’s were assessed and restricted eligibility to permanent protection, reunion with family and health services (general and specialist practitioners, hospital treatment, medication subsidies and assistance from the Early Health Assessment and Intervention Program [EHSS]),</td>
<td>• Poor health</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>• Financial difficulty paying health costs</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Emotional stress (and at times clinical depression) associated with temporary protection, immigration detention and/or separation from family</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Poor health compromised employment opportunities and earning potential, and contributed to financial difficulty.</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Disrupted settlement progress.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Restricted Eligibility to English Language Classes</td>
<td>• Limited capacity to use English contributed to communication difficulty</td>
<td>• Difficulty utilising mainstream services</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Difficulty finding suitable employment</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Disrupted development of confidence and social support networks</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Increased welfare dependency.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Restricted Eligibility to Training, Employment and Income Support</td>
<td>• Denial of work rights, limited income support, employment assistance and adult training limited refugees and asylum seekers capacity for financial independence</td>
<td>• Emotional stress associated with reduced capacity to financially support dependents.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Difficulty finding suitable employment.</td>
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<td>• Difficulty paying back debt.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Restricted Eligibility to Housing and Homeless Services</td>
<td>• Difficultly accessing housing assistance</td>
<td>• Homelessness</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Accumulation of personal issues.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Circumstance</td>
<td>Housing Crisis Vulnerability Factor</td>
<td>Housing Stress Outcome</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fragmented Service Response</td>
<td>• Mixed messages from settlement, reception and mainstream services increased refugees and asylum seekers difficulty obtaining information about accessing services and rights.</td>
<td>• Difficulty obtaining access to settlement and general assistance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poor Flow of Cultural Information</td>
<td>• Refugees and asylum seekers were not comfortable accessing mainstream services due to service providers poor understanding of their service delivery needs. This led to some refugees and asylum seekers preferring not to make use of mainstream services.</td>
<td>• Difficulty obtaining access to settlement and general assistance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poor Flow of Tenant Rights</td>
<td>• With limited knowledge of tenant rights and difficulty engaging tenant advocates meant refugees and asylum seekers faced discrimination in the private rental market.</td>
<td>• Poor quality and expensive housing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information</td>
<td></td>
<td>• Difficultly obtaining a rental property</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poor Flow of Information about</td>
<td>• Risk of exploitative assistance from Migration Agents.</td>
<td>• Excessively high costs for legal assistance with their protection application</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Legal Assistance</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Reduced Demographic Support</td>
<td>• Unable to rely on older generation for support as was done in home country.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Infrastructure in Australia</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cultural Difference sets family</td>
<td>• Pressure from inter-generational and inter-gender cultural differences made families vulnerable to breakdown.</td>
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<td>up for Inter-generational</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cultural Conflict</td>
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<tr>
<td>Living in Private Rental</td>
<td>• Poor match to refugees and asylum seekers need for affordable and secure tenure.</td>
<td>• Difficulty obtaining tenancy</td>
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<tr>
<td>Accommodation</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Living in Public Rental</td>
<td>• Poor match to refugees and asylum seekers cultural and health needs and limited service eligibility.</td>
<td>• Difficulty accessing public housing assistance and appropriate assistance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accommodation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Living in Settlement Housing</td>
<td>• Poor match to refugees and asylum seekers cultural and resettlement needs.</td>
<td>• Difficulty accessing appropriately size property for large families and Difficulty affording private rent after exit n some areas that OAA is located.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accommodation</td>
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Demand and Assistance for Housing

Less than 1% of total clients presenting to housing assistance services were either refugees or asylum seekers. While representing a small group, the unique circumstances of homeless refugees and asylum seekers placed additional pressure on service resources compared to the general homeless client group. The mismatch between resourcing of housing assistance programs and the needs of the refugee and asylum seeker client group limited effective housing support. Refugees and asylum seekers had difficulty accessing appropriate assistance for their support needs. On the other hand, service providers had difficulty assisting this group due to cultural and language barriers and what service providers described as ‘government policy restraint’. Service delivery by some mainstream housing services demonstrated limited understanding of the special needs and pathways into housing crisis for this group. The following section examines refugees and asylum seekers demand for housing assistance and the service response. Features of demand and assistance examined include: the nature of demand, extent of client demand and needs, housing assistance pathways and service provision difficulties.

4.1 Nature of Demand

Client questionnaire data show that refugees and asylum seekers made up a small proportion of the total client group for housing assistance services. However, service providers reported that the extent of need of this group often placed significant demand on service resources compared to other clients. The following section explores the nature of refugees and asylum seekers demand for housing assistance. Factors examined include: the role of primary assistance networks, the spatial distribution of Melbourne primary assistance services, housing assistance demand patterns and the implications of eligibility criteria imposed by housing assistance services.

4.1.1 Presentation of Demand to Primary Assistance Networks

The primary assistance networks of refugees and asylum seekers included a range of specialist services and social networks. Contacts from social networks were commonly members of the persons’ immediate ethnic community. Social networks were relied on heavily during the early stages of settlement or reception, especially by visa categories ineligible to settlement or reception information and orientation assistance. Services were commonly heard about via social networks.

Services that targeted assistance to a specific visa category or ethnic group were most popular among refugees and asylum seekers. Government funding arrangements and informal arrangements between primary assistance services designated target groups to particular services.

Refugees and asylum seekers appeared to seek assistance for all their professional support needs from a particular service. A support worker said:

‘It is me who my community come to for everything…’ (community sector worker).
Clients approached their primary assistance service for housing assistance, even if the service did not provide housing assistance. A community sector worker explained:

*We are not a housing agency, but clients come here for help with housing. We are a front door but not in a position to assist or to do housing support...’* (community sector worker).

Primary assistance services functioned as a central support points to specific visa category or ethnic groups. However, primary assistance services may not be resourced to respond to demand for housing assistance. In order to improve the flow of demand to housing assistance services a collaborative response is needed whereby primary and housing assistance services share responsibility for assisting refugees and asylum seekers experiencing housing crisis.

### 4.1.2 Primary Assistance Service Location

The nature of demand for housing assistance from refugees and asylum seekers related to the spatial distribution of primary assistance services. Figure 4.1.2.1 illustrates the distribution of primary assistance services to refugees and asylum seekers residing in the South-eastern suburbs of Metropolitan Melbourne. As illustrated by Figure 4.1.2.1 half of primary assistance services were located outside the area of residence.

![Location of Primary Assistance Services](image)

Client questionnaire data show that asylum seekers and TPV entrants were most likely to be referred from services outside the study area. Primary assistance services located in the local area for asylum seeker and TPV entrants were recently established relative to inner city services.

Refugee and asylum seeker clients registered a preference for local support services. A former Dandenong resident said:

*I would live in Dandenong only there is no services...’ (client).*

Refugees and asylum seekers residing in the study area and experiencing financial difficulty were unable to pay travel costs to access non-local services:
This location is hard sometimes. I am always going to the city to see the solicitor or the support worker. I go in about 8 times per month, this is where all my income goes...’ (asylum seeker).

Engagement with support services was effected by the client's distance from service locations. Refugees and asylum seekers who had moved to the study area sometimes discontinued support with their original support agency due to travel distances. A TPV entrant said:

‘I don't get help. I was getting help from a service in the city but now they are too far away.’ (TPV entrant).

The spatial distribution of primary assistance services reduced access to assistance for asylum seeker and TPV visa categories residing in the South-eastern suburbs of Metropolitan Melbourne. There was a mismatch between refugee and asylum seeker needs and resourcing of primary assistance services for South-eastern metropolitan Melbourne.

4.1.3 Households Not Using Services

The demographic breakdown of refugees and asylum seekers presenting to housing assistance services was likely to represent an undercount of women and other groups vulnerable to social isolation. This group is less likely to present to a service when in need of housing assistance. A community sector worker described the circumstances of a single parent of two children:

‘The shed has no toilet, heating, hot water, and she has no income. She remains very fearful and refuses to be advocated for to have new accommodation or services linked up to the shed she stays in...’ (community sector worker).

This family has resided in the accommodation for the past 3 years. Demand presenting to primary and housing assistance services is likely to represent an undercount of refugees and asylum seekers vulnerable to social isolation.

4.1.4 Inconsistent Nature of Demand

There was an inconsistent flow of demand to housing assistance services from refugees and asylum seekers. Firstly, the release of large groups of TPV entrants from immigration detention with limited support by DIMIA increased demand for housing assistance over a short period. Under these circumstances primary assistance networks struggled to cope with demand for housing assistance. Secondly, demand fluctuates in line with information about services, which flows through informal communication channels. This flow functions as the primary information source about service providers. For example, successful assistance of one client by a particular service appeared to immediately increase presenting demand from the clients' community. A community sector worker explained:

‘At my previous workplace we had many single men clients. It was often the case that if you successfully assisted one of these persons the next day you would have 11 men all turn up together eligible for the same service...’ (community sector worker).
Inconsistent demand highlights the poor flow of information between primary assistance networks and housing assistance services. Inconsistent demand increased the risk that service resources would be outstripped by need.

### 4.1.5 Service Eligibility Criteria

Eligibility criteria is used by housing assistance services as a basis for establishing the relative vulnerability of all persons presenting to the service for assistance. Support workers reported that refugees and asylum seekers were at risk of being excluded from housing assistance services by client assessment methods or eligibility criteria. Housing assistance services use a variety of methods to assess the relative vulnerability of a client. It was the consensus view of primary assistance service providers that numerical scoring of need, used alone, increased the risk that the level of need for this group was under-represented. A community sector worker explained:

> The numerical scoring criteria is not capturing individual variations. Services seem not to draw up criteria to capture the refugee experience. The extremity of the situation of the client can't be communicated as a numerical score. I feel there is a lack of professional judgment…' (community sector worker)

Primary assistance service providers gave positive feedback towards client assessments that employed multiple methods. For example, both numerical scoring and client history assessments.

Eligibility criteria used by some housing assistance services was reported by primary assistance service providers to exclude persons on the basis of their visa category or visa conditions. A homeless asylum seeker who presented to a number of housing assistance services described his experience:

> The reasons housing services give for not being able to provide assistance are that I am not an Australian citizen and my visa does not allow me to work…’ (asylum seeker).

Some housing assistance services confirmed that clients without an income were ineligible for assistance from their service:

> For this group we check that they have income because if they don't have income then we can't help them…’ (housing sector worker).

Other commonly reported reasons for exclusion included: impermanent Australian residence and the clients’ inability to engage in a sustainable housing plan. A housing worker explained:

> Like anyone else we make sure that the housing plan is sustainable, for example that rent is not too high for income. We give no special treatment to this group…’ (housing sector worker).

Visa conditions that restricted eligibility to income and permanent residence increased barriers to housing for this group. However, it appears that a number of housing assistance services used visa conditions as a basis for exclusion from assistance. Figure 4.1.5.1
Note: Criteria applied by some housing assistance services illustrates the exclusion of particular visa categories from housing assistance according to visa category. Criteria listed are applied by some housing assistance services. A number of community sector workers hypothesised that assessment methods and eligibility criteria, which excluded refugees and asylum seekers, were based on a poor understanding of the client group. A service provider explained:

"There is a clear lack of understanding about this client group. We have trouble having services pick up our referrals. For example, a single mom in really bad accommodation, it’s awful. But no agencies will respond..." (community sector worker).

Assessment methods and eligibility criteria as applied by housing assistance services provided varying accessibility to homeless refugees and asylum seekers.
4.1.6 Summary

The nature of demand for housing assistance by refugees and asylum seekers appeared to be characterised by a fragmented service response. Primary assistance services were presented with first hand demand for housing assistance from refugees and asylum seekers. These services functioned as central support points and were resourced to provide only a limited range of services, not necessarily including housing assistance. Primary assistance services were reliant on the expertise and resources of the housing sector to assist their clients with housing difficulties. However, demand for housing assistance presenting to primary assistance services was not flowing to housing assistance services. The poor flow of demand was associated with factors internal and external to housing assistance services. Specifically, eligibility criteria and assessment methods for some housing assistance services were judgmental of the visa status or visa conditions, and on this basis restricted access to assistance. Further, poor flow of information to refugees and asylum seekers increased the inconsistency of demand for housing assistance. Demand peaks that followed successful flow of information placed pressure on program resources. Demand presenting to housing assistance services was likely to represent only a proportion of refugees and asylum seekers in need of assistance. Service assessment processes and flow of information about services to refugees and asylum seekers presented barriers to accessing housing assistance and reduced the total flow of demand to housing assistance services.
4.2 Housing Circumstances

The housing circumstances of refugees and asylum seekers in the study group, ranged from primary homelessness to independent living. However, their housing circumstances were often subject to entitlement eligibility. The following section details the housing circumstances of refugees and asylum seekers and factors contributing to the precarious housing circumstances of this group.

4.2.1 Precarious Housing Circumstances

Visa conditions made housing circumstances precarious for refugees and asylum seekers awaiting a final decision on their permanent visa application and for New Zealand refugee arrivals. Changes to visa conditions were imminent for refugees and asylum seekers waiting for a final decision on their application. Eligibility could be withdrawn instantly to entitlements that enabled housing to be maintained. For example, the right to work, access to Medicare and income support. Refugees and asylum seekers with withdrawn entitlements were able to maintain housing with assistance from generous social networks. However, the housing circumstances of this group became increasingly precarious over time. In the long-term, social networks burn out, leaving these households with no means to maintain housing. A housing worker explained:

‘Getting support from the community in the long term is a challenge. The community gets to a point where they can’t assist. It is like a saturation for that person because there is too much need in the community. Many people being assisted by their communities live in overcrowded housing with friends, which is a term used loosely; they may have only recently met. They are always under pressure to find accommodation elsewhere. They have to beg to stay where they are...’ (housing sector worker).

An asylum seeker with no work rights or government income support described his experience:

‘I had no-where to stay for three weeks. You see it is hard owing money even when you have a good friend that you stay with. You can not stay there without paying the rent...’ (asylum seeker).

Another asylum seeker with no work rights or government income support described his experience:

‘You see you can ask someone for assistance once but to ask again and again you can not do this. Sometimes I go hungry because I am shy to ask for help. It is hard to explain...’ (asylum seeker).

Refugees and asylum seekers with restricted entitlements were reliant on services to assist if social networks burnt out. Questionnaire data indicated that a high proportion of refugees and asylum seekers presenting to housing assistance services were currently or had been restricted entitlements. Forty-one percent of clients were not eligible to work and 43% were not eligible for government assistance. Half of this client group was waiting for some form of government assistance. The unique circumstances of refugees and asylum seekers meant that primary homelessness could occur suddenly and exit from homelessness to independent living may be impossible without a permanent visa.
4.2.2 Client Housing Circumstances

The following section reports on client questionnaire data and interview data was collected from a range of service providers. Primary assistance service providers gave detailed accounts of their service experience and provided proportional measures of homelessness among their refugee and asylum seeker client group. Primary assistance services reported that no less than one quarter of their clients were experiencing homelessness. Refugees and asylum seekers were reported to experience a range of housing circumstances including primary, secondary and tertiary homelessness. Services report that between 0 and two thirds of clients presenting to their services had nowhere to stay. Further, between 10 and 40 percent of clients presenting to their services had temporary accommodation, and were experiencing secondary homelessness. Services reported that between 16 and 70 percent of clients presenting to their services had shared accommodation, and were experiencing tertiary homelessness. Refugees and asylum seekers that were newly arrived or had been restricted access to settlement information and orientation assistance had a greater risk of homelessness compared to other groups. Further, it appeared that TPV entrants and asylum seekers had a greater risk of long-term homelessness compared to refugees and asylum seekers with other visa categories.

4.2.2.1 Primary Homelessness

Primary assistance networks and housing assistance services endeavor to house all persons in need, however communities and services are struggling to cope with demand. Of clients presenting to housing assistance services one quarter were experiencing primary homeless. Primary assistance services reported regular presentation to their services of refugees and asylum seekers with no-where to stay. Single men were the most common household reported as experiencing primary homelessness. However, lone teenagers and women with children were also reported as commonly experiencing primary homelessness. Refugees and asylum seekers had limited access to housing assistance and did not necessarily seek or obtain assistance when experiencing primary homelessness. A single TPV entrant described his experience:

‘I had no place to sleep for a little while. I didn’t know where to go to get help... I drove to Ballarat and stayed in the forest there for a little while...’ (TPV entrant).

Newly arrived refugees and asylum seekers with limited social networks and knowledge of services were most at risk of experiencing primary homelessness without anyone knowing. A service provider described the risks faced by newly arrived asylum seekers ineligible to the Asylum Seeker Assistance Scheme:

‘Actually the most vulnerable time is when people first arrive, in the first 6 months. If they don’t meet the exemption criteria they can end up sleeping out. No-one may know that they are sleeping out. They may meet someone in the community who will put them up for a couple of nights. They try to find emergency accommodation in the community...’ (community sector worker).

Common places of residence for refugees and asylum seekers experiencing primary homelessness included: the street, parks, cars and religious facilities. Primary assistance services to asylum seekers reported higher levels of primary homelessness amongst their clients compared to services supporting other visa categories.
4.2.2.2 Secondary Homelessness

Members of their community commonly hosted refugees and asylum seekers residing temporarily in accommodation. Hosts were generally referred to as ‘friends or family’, however may not be well known by their guests:

‘Many people being assisted by their communities live in overcrowded housing with friends, which is a term used loosely. They may have only recently met. They are always under pressure to find accommodation elsewhere. They have to beg to stay where they are...’ (housing worker).

Just below one third (31%) of refugees and asylum seekers presenting to housing assistance services were staying temporarily with family and friends. A TPV entrant described his circumstances:

I generally stay in one place no more than 2 nights. In my culture this is the way it is. I can’t count [how many times I have moved in the past year]. I move every 2 to 3 days...’ (TPV entrant).

A service provider described the circumstances of transient refugees and asylum seekers:

They shift themselves. Because they are living with a family or a friend and the persons can not support them forever so they have to move on...’ (community worker).

The financial circumstances of some refugees and asylum seekers make permanent accommodation unfavorable. Temporary accommodation is preferred for its flexibility. This group is commonly unaccompanied by children. A single male TPV entrant described his intention to reside in temporary accommodation due to financial difficulties:

I have to have a house that is not permanent in case my job changes...’ (TPV entrant).

Singles were more likely than families to experience secondary homelessness. Newly arrived refugees and asylum seekers ineligible to the OAA program commonly stayed in temporary accommodation with family or friends. Recipients of Centrelink benefits, the ASAS payment and families with one partner ineligible to income support were reported as more commonly experiencing secondary homelessness, compared to refugees and asylum seekers who were working.
4.2.2.3 Tertiary Homelessness

Living without a private bedroom or lounge room and sharing bathroom and kitchen facilities was common among the clients of primary assistance services. Of clients presenting to housing assistance services 6% of refugees and asylum seekers were either residing in a rooming house (3%) or church/community housing (3%) and had shared bathroom and lounge facilities. Some clients had been living in tertiary homelessness for a long period:

‘One of my clients, he is a single man, for five years he lived with 15 people. They were always not sure how they would pay the rent, they need transitional housing…” (community sector worker).

Another worker reported on a group that were only eligible to limited income support:

‘For financial reasons they live in overcrowded accommodation. Other community groups when they have new arrivals they put up the people at their house. The community shuffles them around among them…” (community sector worker).

Other groups with long-term financial difficulty in Australia choose to share one house between two or more households to make housing more affordable. Visa categories included: asylum seekers, TPV entrants, humanitarian entrants and spouse entrant households. It appears that early arrivals without access to the Ongoing Arrival Accommodation (OAA) Program had a higher risk of overcrowding compared to clients with OAA housing. Concern for homeless households with children appeared to draw greater community support, compared to households without children. A similar trend was evident for single women, who were more likely to obtain a response from the community, compared to single men. A community sector worker reported:

‘Single women generally can access temporary accommodation. Some single men end up sleeping on the floor of community buildings…With families there is a lot more sympathy…” (community sector worker).

Availability of community hosting varied by household group, with greater sympathy for households with accompanying children and women.

4.2.3 Summary

Primary assistance services experienced significant unmet demand for housing assistance by refugee and asylum seeker clients. Primary assistance services reported that at least one quarter of their clients were experiencing homelessness. Housing circumstances varied by visa category. The housing circumstances of asylum seekers were likely to be poorer compared to other visa category groups, followed by New Zealand refugee arrivals, spouse entrants, TPV entrants and humanitarian entrants. The unique circumstances of refugees and asylum seekers means that primary homelessness may occur suddenly. Further, exit from homelessness before a permanent visa is granted was likely to require collaboration across primary and housing assistance services and social networks.
4.3 Housing Assistance Pathways

Housing assistance was discussed as part of primary and housing assistance service provider interviews. Workers were asked if referrals to particular housing assistance programs were successful or difficult. This section documents utilisation patterns for specific refugee and asylum seeker visa categories and the current role played by housing assistance services.

Primary assistance service providers were asked during interviews if referral rejections from housing assistance services had any impact on future referrals. It was a consensus view of primary assistance service providers that if a referral was rejected the reason for rejection was the most important factor influencing if a referral was made to the service in the future. Primary assistance service providers emphasised that they understood that housing assistance services were operating at capacity and were not resourced to meet the needs of all persons in need of housing assistance. Ongoing referrals were made to housing assistance services that presented a positive attitude towards the client group. These services commonly cited the low availability of resources as the reason for referral rejection. On the other hand, housing assistant services that gave feedback identifying refugee and asylum seeker clients as ineligible for assistance were rarely referred to in the future. Reasons for restricted eligibility given by housing assistance services included: non-residency, no income, no Medicare card and the clients’ inability to engage in a sustainable housing plan (often due to a low income).

Particular housing assistance programs may have low referrals of refugees and asylum seekers due to the inappropriateness of the program. Primary assistance service providers reported that service responses available to homeless persons were often inappropriate for refugees and asylum seekers, making sleeping out a better option for some clients. Inappropriate housing assistance programs reduced accessibility to housing assistance.

4.3.1 Asylum Seekers in the Community

Referrals to housing assistance programs from services assisting asylum seekers included: support to enter the private rental market, HEF, emergency relief and crisis and transitional housing. Asylum seeker support services reported referral successes for emergency relief, THM properties nominated to asylum seekers with no income and specialist asylum seeker housing support workers. Asylum seeker support services reported successfully accessing SAAP crisis accommodation, however raised concerns around the appropriateness of this service. The crisis accommodation environment was inappropriate for victims of torture and trauma. This client group was prone to premature exit from SAAP accommodation. Asylum seekers had limited success in obtaining HEF from THM and SAAP providers. To exit homelessness following withdrawal of community support, this group relied on long to medium-term rent free accommodation provided by independently funded services or the THM program.

Asylum seekers facing primary homelessness following withdrawal of ASAS income support, canceling of work rights or depletion of personal or community resources were commonly residing in the private rental market. Primary assistance services attempted to maintain tenancies by seeking HEF for rent in arrears. A successful HEF payment allowed the support service time to locate a property while providing stability and keeping any children in school.
The Asylum Seeker Project reported that during the February 2001 to February 2003 period 9% of clients accessed HEF, however all their clients fit HEF eligibility criteria.

Support providers expressed concern that their client group was misunderstood by some THM services. Primary assistance services supporting asylum seekers made applications for floating THM housing stock, however with limited success. Asylum seekers were reported to be excluded from some THM services if they had no income or health care card. Primary assistance service providers expressed concern around a THM policy to withdraw the rent-free status of released properties. This has forced additional time to be used to negotiate rent-free properties for future clients with no income. Primary assistance service providers found securing housing assistance for their clients time consuming.

4.3.2 TPV Entrants

Housing assistance referrals made by services assisting TPV entrants included: HIR, HEF and THM programs. Access of nominated properties from the THM program was considered a success. However, other referrals to all programs were reported unsuccessful.

Housing assistance for this group was primarily provided by primary assistance services. Assistance included internal referral to 6 transitional housing properties, for which land lording was internally managed. TPV entrants with financial resources were provided assistance to enter the private rental market from primary assistance services. A campaign to improve real estate agents’ view of TPV entrants as tenants enhanced access to the private rental market for this group. Services assisting TPV entrants reported that referrals to housing assistance services for accommodation received no response. Restricted eligibility to public housing reduced exit options for homeless TPV entrants to the private rental market. Support obtaining suitable employment played an important role in making private rental tenancies sustainable.

4.3.3 Humanitarian Entrants and Spouse Entrants

Humanitarian and spouse entrants were hosted by their proposer or community members after arrival in Australia. Following initial housing arrangements humanitarian entrant may be referred around the community for housing assistance, or if no-one in the community will support them the local MRC generally assisted. Specialist and community based responses referred clients to MRC’s when clients were in housing crisis. Generalist agencies and MRC’s applied for housing assistance from OoH and SAAP and THM providers. If appropriate a primary assistance service lodged a public housing application. Housing assistance for this group has included agency engagement with real estate agents, OoH and SAAP and THM providers to enhance clients’ access to the private and public rental housing. Community support workers, including MRC workers reported that their applications were not always successful and that reasons for rejection were usually competition on the day, or that no suitably sized properties were available. Exit options for this group included public housing or support to enter and maintain private rental housing. More generally, support to obtain suitable employment was required to maintain housing in the private rental market.

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20 Asylum Seeker Project (2003), Welfare issues and immigration outcomes for asylum seekers on Bridging Visa E.
4.3.4 Assistance Provided by Housing Assistance Services

Table 4.3.2.5 details support needed and provided to refugee and asylum seeker clients who presented to housing assistant services. This client group commonly needed assistance either for the purchase of crisis accommodation (50%) or assistance with long-term accommodation costs (38%). While all clients with an identified need for crisis accommodation were assisted only 19% of clients were provided assistance with long-term accommodation costs. Clients in need but not provided assistance with long-term accommodation costs were either, referred to a settlement service, provided crisis accommodation or provided no assistance. Housing information and advice was needed by 56% of clients and provided to 50%. Counseling and support was needed and provided to 56% of clients. Advocacy was needed by 44% of clients, however provided for just 25% of clients. Half of clients were referred to a settlement service and a further 19% were referred to a transitional housing service. Housing assistance services commented on the usefulness of the MRC’s drop in time when assisting this group.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Support to client</th>
<th>Needed N</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Provided N</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Purchase of crisis accommodation</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assistance with long-term accommodation costs</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Housing information/advice</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Counselling and support</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advocacy</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Referral to settlement service</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Referral to other Transitional housing service</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Multiple response - percentages do not equal 100

Source: HRASS Refugee and Asylum Seeker Client Questionnaire

4.3.5 Summary

Patterns of referral to primary assistance services for housing assistance were characterised by eligibility criteria and service appropriateness. Primary assistance service providers reported that ongoing referrals were made to housing assistance services that presented a positive attitude towards the client group. On the other, housing assistant services that gave feedback identifying refugee and asylum seeker clients as ineligible for assistance were rarely referred to in the future. A number of housing assistance programs were inappropriate for refugee and asylum seeker clients. Support workers generally did not refer clients to inappropriate programs, however these programs were utilised by some clients experiencing primary homelessness. Low availability of appropriate housing assistance programs reduced accessibility to housing assistance for refugees and asylum seekers.

Referral rejection difficulties were reported for HEF, THM and public housing assistance programs. For the SAAP, referral options were limited by the inappropriateness of assistance offered by the program. Asylum seekers, TPV entrants, spouse entrants and New Zealand refugee arrivals were ineligible for public housing. There was varying accessibility to HEF and THM programs. Access often depended on the understanding of the client group by housing assistance workers. It appeared that Humanitarian entrant referrals to housing assistance services were more successful compared TPV entrants and asylum seekers.
4.4 Assistance Difficulties

Service providers reported difficulty meeting the housing assistance needs of refugees and asylum seekers because of cultural and language barriers and what was described by service providers as ‘government policy restraint’. The mismatch between resources for housing assistance and the needs of the refugee and asylum seeker client group limited effective housing support. It was evident that refugees and asylum seekers with settlement or reception difficulties required long-term support to maintain a sustainable housing plan. The following section details workers’ difficulty providing effective housing assistance to refugees and asylum seekers.

4.4.1 Referral Difficulties

The following section details difficulties associated with referral processes to housing assistance for refugees and asylum seekers. Referral processes for mainstream housing assistance services were difficult and time consuming to navigate for refugees and asylum seekers and their support workers. Furthermore, limited resourcing of housing assistance that addressed the special needs of this group limited appropriate referral options.

Primary assistance service providers reported referral difficulties with housing assistance services. To obtain assistance homeless refugees and asylum seekers had to approach multiple housing services. A specialist worker described a clients’ pathway to housing assistance:

‘Usually we send people to the housing service to request assistance. This is negotiated with the client. Passing the buck goes on a bit. The client then rings the service and they say no we are not the right organisation but try these numbers they may be able to help you...’ (community sector worker).

An asylum seeker who had no-where to stay for a three-week period before approaching mainstream housing assistance services described his experience:

‘When I was getting into this housing I called a local housing service first, then my asylum seeker service then a non-local housing service and then this housing service, which was not local for me. This took all day. The reasons people give for not being able to provide assistance are that I am not an Australian citizen and my visa does not allow me to work. I am an asylum seeker and I am less of a priority than other Australians when a vacant room is up for grabs. I think many people do not want to understand the situation of an asylum seeker. This makes it hard for us...’ (Asylum Seeker).

The exclusion of refugees and asylum seekers experiencing housing crisis or homelessness from particular housing assistance services contributed to feelings of unwelcome in Australia. Also, refugees and asylum seekers who have been referred from one housing assistance service to another were forced to retell their story many times as a worker explained:

‘It is problematic that when we are going for this accommodation we have to get them to tell their story again and again...’ (community sector worker).
Another referral difficulty reported by service providers was that clients who had obtained support from a housing assistance service were referred for housing assistance back to the primary support agency directly or indirectly. A service provider described an indirect referral back to the original support agency:

“They stay at the crisis accommodation for 2 days and then have moved them into HEF short-term accommodation for 2 days without even telling us. So the client comes back to us after that…” (community sector worker).

A number of service providers hypothesised that housing assistance services consider housing assistance to refugees and asylum seekers to be outside their responsibility, and rather the responsibility of specialist refugee and asylum seeker services. A community sector worker explained:

“There is an assumption that there should be a specific service for our clients. This amounts to discrimination…” (community sector worker).

Another service provider described referral patterns between their service and housing assistance services:

“The referral from the housing service is hand passing these clients to us. It’s this mentality that if someone has a particular visa status they refer them to my service... As far as I know they don’t have housing stock for our clients.” (community sector worker).

It was suggested that some housing assistance services had a limited understanding of the assistance roles of primary and housing assistance services. Further, engagement by housing assistance service providers with service delivery information relevant to this client group appeared to be poor compared to other client groups. A housing worker described their frustration:

‘Housing services tend to refer clients from this group to our housing service. These clients and housing workers generally don’t know about primary assistance services. We give this information to the housing assistance worker but it seems to go through like a sift…” (Housing sector worker).

Refugee and asylum seeker clients had difficulty obtaining housing assistance and were at risk of inappropriate referrals after they had entered a housing assistance service.

4.4.2 Resource Wastage

The time resources of primary assistance service providers needed to obtain a successful referral for housing assistance was wasteful. A community sector worker described her experience:

“The time that it takes to find housing is such a waste. It might take us one whole day to find housing for a client. We only do this in very extreme circumstances…” (community sector worker).

Another worker reported:
Finding housing for these clients is hard work and very time consuming. Only 1% of the time can we make 1 or 2 phone calls and be successful. We always have to try again. Clients find the system in Australia new and very different to what they know. They need support letters from us to access housing. But we are not housing workers...’ (community sector worker).

The time demands on support workers were increased by the necessity to negotiate for housing assistance. Service providers described having to negotiate for access to a range of housing assistance programs. A community sector worker commented:

'I had a client who I needed to apply for a washing machine. It was a very large family and a single parent. I think 10 kids. This white good was a health item, which are allowed under the HEF guidelines. When I applied the housing service said yes I can understand but if we give one to her everyone will want one. I had to take it to all the way to senior management of Office of Housing and clarify with senior management that it was a health item. They said that they would do it once and never again. Every step of the way it was a struggle...' (community sector worker).

Another worker described the process of obtaining rent-free transitional housing:

'Housing services do have a set number of people who they allow to stay rent free in their properties. But getting families into these properties requires negotiation every time...' (housing sector worker).

In some cases support workers reported that their referrals for housing assistance were unsuccessful despite the high extent of client needs. A community sector worker explained:

'We have great trouble getting any funding at all. We had a single mother who is disabled, with a baby and we had no response. But we couldn’t help her because we don’t have facilities for disabled persons...’ (community sector worker).

Poor understanding of the client group by housing assistance service providers appeared to contribute to an inflexible response by some housing assistance services. Referral processes to housing assistance services were inefficient, especially with regard to appropriate housing assistance and referrals for this group. To improve efficiency there was a need for housing assistance service providers to improve their knowledge base in this specialist area.

4.4.3 Limited Housing Assistance Options

There was a lack of appropriate housing assistance programs available to refugees and asylum seekers experiencing housing crisis and homelessness. Housing assistance service providers reported resource difficulties meeting the needs of refugees and asylum seekers, including their extent of need and special needs. Internal and external factors were identified as contributors to the lack of appropriate housing assistance programs for this client group. Housing assistance workers commented that while their service practice required that clients develop an exit plan, visa conditions limited the possibility of sustainable independent housing outcomes. A housing sector worker explained:
The service response is the same but it is in the face of government policy constraint. The clients who have no income they really are different...’ (housing sector worker).

Government policy constraint was imposed by visa conditions, which restricted the right to work, permanent protection, family reunion and access to settlement and mainstream services. These restrictions limited options for sustainable, independent living. For example, visa application processes can draw out the length of stay in a transitional housing property. A housing sector worker explained:

One asylum seeker family that we have been supporting has been with our service for a 4 year period. They arrived on a business visa and applied for asylum immediately. We expected that their stay with us would be no more than 3 to 4 months. They are now on a bridging visa E and we have learnt that we can’t expect anything when it comes to length of support for this client group. They are living rent free in our property, bills are paid by a donor. It is uncertain how long this will go on for as the donor has never met the client and has no real relationship with them. They could stop donating at any point...’ (housing worker).

And another worker commented on the length of support:

‘Length of stay in the properties is an issue. The longest people are meant to stay is 12 months but inevitably this client group stay much longer...’ (Housing Sector Worker).

The length of support needed by clients without a permanent visa was determined by the wait period for the permanent visa, which was undeterminable. In addition to a potentially long length of support particular visa categories (asylum seekers, New Zealand refugee arrivals and spouse entrants) may be restricted income and require rent-free properties and bill payment support. While some housing assistance services take on clients with high needs other services restricted eligibility to persons unable to achieve a sustainable outcome within the service’s set timeframe. A housing sector worker explained:

‘For this group we check that they have income because if they don’t have income then we can’t help them. And then like anyone else we make sure that the housing plan is sustainable, for example that rent is not too high for income. We give no special treatment to this group...’ (housing sector worker).

Eligibility criteria that restricted assistance from clients who had an extent of need requiring assistance beyond conventional support timeframes and resource allocation, failed to assess persons experiencing housing crisis and homelessness on the basis of need. Housing assistance service providers reported that housing assistance programs had resource difficulties meeting the needs of refugees and asylum seekers. Assessment processes appeared to exclude refugees and asylum seekers due to their unique circumstances.

4.4.4 Housing Support Difficulties

Housing assistance service providers assisting refugee and asylum seeker clients reported that the type of support provided reflected the extent of their needs. Further, for this client group housing assistance needs were often associated with visa conditions. A housing sector worker reported:
‘It is intense support that we provide. It is negotiating with services, trying to get access to things. It is also about linking in with generous donors [of money]…’ (Housing sector worker).

Housing assistance service providers reported difficulties responding to the special needs of this group. Disclosure of support related information for this group required greater resources compared to other client groups. A housing sector worker explained:

‘Some people in the community are afraid to speak up at times. They stay quiet. Disclosure of issues is harder. Also it is difficult to make things in your personal life so public when it is a small community. It is more difficult in this situation…’ (Housing sector worker).

The large family size of some refugee and asylum seekers households made securing suitably sized THM program and public housing difficult. A housing support worker explained:

‘Large families is a difficulty. This limits accommodation options and discrimination in the private rental market is a problem. On top of this there is no appropriate public housing stock, and caravans are not an option. Often people must lie about the number of children they have…’ (Housing support worker).

Language barriers were reported as a difficulty for some services. A tenancy administration worker explained:

‘When clients call about their maintenance it can be hard to understand them. For example this morning a man called and all that I could understand was heater and that his phone number was 9. I was unable to get the phone number to call him back with an interpreter. I think that the support workers need to assist in this situation and be there for their clients….’ (Housing support worker).

Another tenancy administration worker commented:

‘It is not our role to chase up maintenance. Actually it is quite common for us to be given a maintenance request from this client group and get it wrong. For example the trades person turns up to fix the front door and it is the gate that is broken. Or the wrong type of trades persons will arrive for the job. Someone who does glass and the problem is with the wood….The relationships between the support worker and landlord are often confused by the client and support workers…’ (Housing support Worker)

Housing assistance service providers described some difficulties working with primary assistance support workers:

‘There is a high turn over of support workers and often the workers who are there forget about their clients. For example they work hard and fast to get the public housing application in, get them into transitional and then provide no assistance. One support worker was asking us if their client was still in the transitional property. This kind of support has an impact on the client…’ (Housing sector worker).
Another group of service providers indicated that primary assistance service providers were difficult to work with:

Support workers seem to have trouble grasping their role. For one family the children have a youth worker supporting them at school. Whenever there is a problem with the house the youth worker finds out because the kids have said that the heater isn't working and then they call us. This is often after two weeks in the cold. These clients are so grateful for the house that they don't want to complain. It takes a while for their right to complain and to have things fixed to sink in. There is information given to the clients when they move in about their rights as a tenant and how to contact us about house problems, but it is in English and clearly is not well understood by the clients. They need more information. This is what the support worker should be giving them…' (Housing support Worker).

Limited availability of ongoing support for refugees and asylum seekers appeared to increase this group’s vulnerability to housing crisis. A number of housing assistance services provided flexible and appropriate housing assistance for this group. Even so, housing outcomes were constrained by visa conditions and the limited availability of long-term housing support.

4.4.5 Poor Information Flow

Primary assistance services observed that some housing assistance service providers had a limited understanding of the nature of housing difficulties experienced by refugees and asylum seekers. For example, there was concern that housing assistance service providers had limited knowledge of visa conditions and their relationship to the housing circumstances of this group. A client described his experience:

'I even find that people who work for this housing service do not always understand my situation with the visa. They don't know that I can not work. The treatment from these people is sometimes not so good. Some do understand though, others don't... Once when I went to the office for something and I was asked for my Centrelink details. People don't understand that I don't get Centrelink benefits...' (Asylum Seeker).

Other areas of limited knowledge included: cultural, torture and trauma and language associated needs. Lack of understanding of client backgrounds contributed to clients’ unease in accessing housing assistance. A primary assistance worker outlined clients’ difficulties in accessing mainstream housing services:

'Asylum seeker clients are treated like they are any other client when they are not. Services have been insensitive around the visa of the client and use inappropriate language. Clients are in tears in my office... What is needed for this client group is a specialised response...' (community sector worker).

Services may also misread the extent of clients needs. A primary assistance service provider reported:

'Agencies often misread needs and level of need for asylum seekers. There simply isn't the awareness there. Also there is a fear factor. Concern that clients will enter
Anxiety from low knowledge of the client group may contribute to clients exclusion from housing assistance services. Primary assistance service providers linked understanding of the client group to flexible service delivery and successful referral. A community sector worker explained:

’Some mainstream housing services are very good. Knowledge of asylum seekers in the housing service is essential to this success...’ (community sector worker).

Service providers may have a low knowledge of the network of assistance agencies for this group. Implications included exclusion from housing assistance services. A primary assistance service provider explained:

‘Often we have to prove that a situation is sustainable for us to access assistance from the mainstream housing services. But we are going to be housing these people after we find the family accommodation. We need assistance in order to buy time. Services don’t understand what we are doing. We need to build trust with them. When we are ringing around for assistance from another housing service it is very easy for people on the other end to say no. It is easy for them not to put the extra thought in especially with agencies as stretched as they already are...’ (community sector worker).

It was the consensus view of service providers that some housing assistance services had difficulty understanding this client group. Further service delivery of mainstream housing assistance programs had difficulty responding flexibly to the needs of refugees and asylum seekers. Some mainstream housing assistance services demonstrated knowledge of appropriate assistance for refugees and asylum seekers, however, difficulties experienced by other services were associated with poor uptake of information relevant to this client group.

4.4.6 Summary

Service providers reported difficulty meeting the housing assistance needs of refugees and asylum seekers because of cultural and language barriers and government policy restraint. Housing assistance services reported difficulties providing appropriate assistance to this group. Difficulties included; language barriers, support engagement challenges, low availability of accommodation for large families and low availability of support before and after housing crisis. The mismatch between housing assistance resources and the needs of the refugee and asylum seeker client group limited effective housing support.

Service delivery and service models for some mainstream housing assistance programs demonstrated a limited understanding of the special needs of this group and their pathways into housing crisis. It was common for these services to offer inflexible assistance to refugees and asylum seekers. There were referral difficulties for refugee and asylum seeker clients obtaining housing assistance due to restricted access to specific visa categories. Also, there was a risk of inappropriate referral of refugee and asylum seeker clients after they had entered the housing assistance service. There appeared to be confusion around the appropriate service providers of housing assistance for refugees and asylum seekers. Some housing assistance services referred refugees and asylum seekers in need of housing assistance to primary assistance services. The limited understanding of the needs of refugees
and asylum seekers of some housing assistance service providers reduced responsiveness to the special needs of this client group.
4.5 Discussion

Refugees and asylum seekers preferred targeted settlement or reception assistance. Service utilisation patterns varied considerably among refugees and asylum seekers. However, a common theme observed involved their engagement in an ongoing service-user relationship with a primary service. The primary assistance service delivered targeted assistance for their visa category or cultural background. Assistance for all the needs of the client was sought from this service, including housing. Refugees and asylum seekers were entirely reliant on their primary assistance service for general assistance and advocacy to access a broader range of essential services.

Primary assistance services for homeless refugees and asylum seekers included a range of community delivered services. The Commonwealth's withdrawal of centralised service provision for specific visa category groups effectively shifted service provision for these groups to a fragmented response from a range of community delivered services. Housing assistance provided by the centralised Commonwealth program for offshore refugee entrants was generally targeted to this group's special needs. However, there was a variety of community delivered service models. Service models utilised included:

- Targeted housing assistance as a component of settlement or reception services;
- Targeted housing assistance based in a mainstream housing service; and
- Mainstream generalist housing assistance.

Primary assistance services reported difficulty addressing housing stress experienced by their refugee and asylum seeker clients. No less than one quarter refugee and asylum seeker clients of primary assistance services were experiencing homelessness.

Demand for housing assistance presenting to primary assistance services was not flowing to housing assistance services. Refugees and asylum seekers utilisation of available housing assistance appeared to be limited by:

- A mismatch between refugee and asylum seeker needs and available accommodation and housing support; and
- Poor information flow between service sectors and provider teams, which reduced housing assistance services responsiveness to the special needs and life circumstances of this group.

Less than 1% of total clients presenting to housing assistance services were either refugees or asylum seekers. However, the circumstances of this group placed additional resource burdens on housing assistance services compared to the general homeless client group. The high extent of need of this group was associated with Commonwealth Government policy constraint, the refugee or asylum seeker background and cultural and language barriers. Difficulties for housing assistance service providers included; language barriers, support engagement challenges, low availability of accommodation for large families and low availability of support before and after housing crisis. The mismatch between housing assistance resources and the needs of the refugee and asylum seeker client group reduced the effectiveness of housing support.

The limited understanding by some housing assistance services of the needs of refugees and asylum seekers reduced responsiveness to the special needs of this client group. Specifically, eligibility criteria and assessment methods for some housing assistance services were judgmental of the visa status or visa conditions and restricted access to assistance for specific visa categories. Also, this group was at risk of inappropriate referrals after they had entered the housing assistance service. Some housing assistance services referred refugees...
and asylum seekers in need of housing assistance to primary assistance services. There appeared to be confusion around the appropriate service providers of housing assistance for refugees and asylum seekers.
Future Directions

5.1 Service Delivery and Sector Collaboration

This section outlines directions for improving responsiveness to refugees and asylum seekers assistance needs including: culturally appropriate assistance, language support, assistance sensitive to torture and trauma background and temporary protection in Australia.

5.1.1 Cultural Barriers

Service providers poor knowledge of a range of emerging Australian ethnic communities in some mainstream services posed difficulties for refugee and asylum seeker clients, as well as clients from CALD backgrounds. A number of support workers reported that it was common for mainstream service providers to have no knowledge of the customs and national history of the clients’ country of origin. For example, victims of domestic violence with specific cultural backgrounds may have community support at stake if they choose to leave their partner. Or, Halal food may not be provided on occasions where food is shared. Inadequate cross-cultural skills of housing assistance service providers generally resulted in discrimination and offence for refugee and asylum seeker clients. Training to develop service providers’ understanding of refugees and asylum seekers cultural needs is required.

5.1.2 Language Barriers

Refugees and asylum seekers with limited English language skills required quality interpreter support, for disclosure of information relevant to support needs. Appropriate interpreters provided:

• Interpretation for the dialect spoken by the client;
• Were of the appropriate gender for cultural needs for the client;
• Were of a background of non-conflicting politics between and within the cultural group of the client; and
• Provided information privacy.

To improve standards of service provision protocols need to be introduced to assist selection of appropriate interpreters.

5.1.3 Special Refugee and Asylum Seeker Needs

Refugees and asylum seekers are deeply affected by torture and trauma experiences and their non-permanent protection status. Service provision by mainstream services was reported to at times demonstrate little or no understanding of the torture and trauma or visa backgrounds of the client. Service providers had difficulty obtaining sufficient information about visa conditions. There was a risk that misinformation was provided to refugees and asylum seekers about their visa conditions. Some refugees and asylum seekers were uncomfortable accessing mainstream services due to service providers' poor understanding of their service delivery needs. This led to some refugees and asylum seekers preferring not to utilise mainstream services. For example, a number of support workers reported lack of sensitive language around visa and lack of responsiveness to torture and trauma needs.
Training to improve understanding by service providers of refugees and asylum seekers' special needs is required.

5.1.4 Collaborative Service Response

Set policy around eligibility to housing assistance services for refugee and asylum seeker clients and additional training and staffing may be required to improve the interface between primary and housing assistance networks. Improved flow of information between primary and housing assistance services is required to reduce the fear felt by housing assistance service providers of high use of service resources when assisting this client group. To improve the flow of information between primary and housing assistance services opportunities for relationship building between service providers need to be pursued.

5.2 Reducing Housing Stress

The following section examines directions for improving housing outcomes including: visa conditions, affordable housing, proximity to community and service support, property size and appropriate environment for health needs.

5.2.1 Visa Conditions

Restricted eligibility to settlement or reception entitlements increased settlement difficulties and housing stress for refugees and asylum seekers. Eighty-eight percent of refugees and asylum seekers presenting to housing assistance services had been restricted full settlement or reception entitlements. Housing stress reductions were achieved by increasing refugee and asylum seeker visa category groups' eligibility settlement and reception services.

5.2.2 Housing Factors

5.2.2.1 Affordable Housing

Affordable housing reduced financial hardship for refugees and asylum seekers who were experiencing financial difficulty. In the short-term refugees and asylum seekers were at risk of debt accumulation and restricted access to income. In the long-term refugees and asylum seekers were at risk of financial difficulty due to debt accumulation and employment difficulties. Debt was commonly accumulated from costs for arrival travel, on-arrival set-up, refugee determination legal assistance, high health costs and paying for rent in OAA housing after the 4 week free rent cut off point. The work opportunities of refugees and asylum seekers were limited by restricted eligibility to work and government assistance.

The share house model was utilised across private and public housing to increase housing affordability for a range of household types. Single males shared housing in the private and public rental markets. Couples with and without children shared accommodation in the private rental market. Generally two families shared one property. Share housing, however, was often overcrowded.
5.2.2.2 Proximity to Community and Service Support

It was the consensus view of support workers that the original housing area for refugees and asylum seekers should be maintained in the long-term to support established personal, community and service support networks. Refugees and asylum seekers well-being may be assisted by the development of networks with persons who share a cultural background and the experience of torture and trauma. On the other hand, some refugees and asylum seekers need to reside away from areas of residence for these communities. Support workers warned against refugees and asylum seekers residing in service deserts.

5.2.2.3 Property Size

Study participants reported that some refugees and asylum seekers had difficulty obtaining an appropriately sized property. Many refugees and asylum seekers have a cultural background where it is common that there is 5 to 10 children per household. The property size needs for many refugee and asylum seeker households are larger than two or three bedroom properties, which make up the bulk of private and public rental stock.

5.2.2.4 Health

Victims of torture and trauma required housing that was sensitive to their pre-migration experience. For example, victims of sniper attacks require ground floor housing. Refugees and asylum seekers need housing that provides a basic sense of safety and supports recovery from torture and trauma. Protocols that ensure clients health needs are met need to be improved.

5.2.2.5 Public Versus Private Tenancy

Public and private rental tenures offer refugees and asylum seekers different options. Private rental tenure is likely to offer tenants choice, however limit affordability and security of tenure. On the other hand, public housing is more likely to be an affordable and secure tenancy, however, provides limited access to appropriately designed and located housing. It was the consensus view of support workers that access by refugees and asylum seekers to public housing is likely to reduce long-term welfare service costs.
5.3 Discussion

Prerequisites for improved housing outcomes included; efficient use of community based resources for the long-term; and housing stability for refugees and asylum seekers by improved well-being and capacity to settle.

Improved equality of access to housing assistance services for refugees and asylum seekers required greater sensitivity to the special circumstances of this group by client assessment processes. Improved sensitivity to cultural, torture and trauma backgrounds and visa conditions is needed.

Greater initiative by mainstream housing services is required to develop accommodation infrastructure that meets large families dwelling size needs and other cultural needs.

Housing assistance service providers required training to improve responsiveness to refugees and asylum seekers special needs and utilisation of cross-sector collaborative housing assistance. Further, increased resourcing to housing assistance service models targeting refugees and asylum seekers is needed to improve housing support outcomes.
Discussion and Recommendations

The Commonwealth's entitlement restrictions treat some refugee and asylum seeker visa category groups like 'second class' refugees or asylum seekers on the basis of their mode of entry to Australia. Refugees and asylum seekers have resettlement and torture and trauma related needs on arrival in Australia. However, access to the full range of resettlement or reception entitlements has been restricted from some visa categories. This policy has disrupted resettlement progress, increased the risk of housing crisis and homelessness and presented barriers to obtaining secure housing.

Entitlements that may be restricted from refugees and asylum seekers included support during early arrival stages and assistance to obtain long-term settlement outcomes. Entitlement restrictions were most severe for asylum seeker visa categories, followed by spouse entrants, New Zealand refugee arrivals, temporary protection visa entrants and humanitarian entrants. The Commonwealth's entitlement restrictions were discriminatory of refugees and asylum seekers by their mode of entry to Australia. Rather, need should be recognised as a basis for settlement and reception entitlement eligibility.

The Commonwealth's withdrawal of services has created gaps in service provision that effectively shifted service provision for a range of services to the community sector. Refugees and asylum seekers commonly present to a primary assistance service, which provides specialist assistance for their visa category or cultural background. Assistance is sought from the primary service for all their needs, and they are entirely reliant on this service for general assistance and advocacy to access a broader range of services. However, referral to other services was limited by the mismatch between resourcing of mainstream housing services and this group's specific needs.

It was the consensus view of refugee and asylum seeker support workers that housing assistance resources available to the service system did not match the type of housing assistance needed by refugees and asylum seekers. Primary assistance service providers reported that no less than one quarter of their clients were homeless as a result of difficulty accessing housing assistance. Demand for housing assistance presenting to primary assistance services appeared not to flow to housing assistance services. Primary assistance services recognised that there was significant unmet demand for housing assistance services, however considered referral difficulties or successes as associated with housing assistance services poor responsiveness to this groups' special needs and life circumstances.

The refugee and asylum seeker client questionnaire collection recorded demand from refugees and asylum seekers at less than 1% of total clients presenting to housing assistance services. The majority of refugees and asylum seekers that presented to housing assistance services were recent arrivals (67%) or presently were or had a history of restricted access either to full settlement or reception entitlements (88%).

Access to appropriate housing assistance for refugees and asylum seekers was limited by poor information flow between service sectors and provider teams and a mismatch between refugees and asylum seekers needs and available housing assistance programs. Barriers to accessing housing assistance increased the risk that refugees and asylum seekers failed to have their needs identified or addressed and accumulated personal issues overtime. Subsequently the extent of need of this group increased in the long-term.
Appropriate resourcing of housing assistance targeting the refugee and asylum seeker client group required collaboration between primary and housing assistance service sectors. However, a coordinated and targeted response to the housing assistance, settlement and reception needs of this group, requires commitment from the Commonwealth Government.

Future Directions

All refugee and asylum seeker visa categories should be given access to the full range of available settlement or reception services to prevent accumulation of personal issues overtime. In the long term restriction of entitlements was associated with increased risk of housing crisis and ongoing welfare dependency.

Improved housing assistance service delivery required staff training to improve responsiveness to refugees and asylum seekers special needs and utilisation of other service sectors for collaborative housing assistance. From the policy level there is a need for the design of assessment processes to provide greater sensitivity to the special circumstances and personal issues of this group. Also, increased initiative is needed to develop housing assistance programs that meet large families dwelling size needs and torture and trauma associated health needs. Collaboration between primary and housing assistance services could be improved by increasing availability of housing assistance targeted to this group and providing service eligibility for all visa category groups. Specifically, housing service support places need to be allocated on the basis of ‘level of barriers to housing’ for the Housing Establishment Fund (HEF), crisis, transitional and public accommodation programs.

A coordinated and targeted response to the housing assistance, settlement and reception needs of this group is needed to adequately address their extent of need. This requires commitment from the Commonwealth Government to change current policy settings. To prevent long-term hardship for refugees and asylum seekers and additional service user burden on the government and welfare sectors the current Commonwealth policy of limiting entitlements needs to be abolished. This will enable efficient use of community based resources for the long-term and housing stability for refugees and asylum seekers by improved well-being and capacity to settle.
Recommendations

Commonwealth Government

- That all refugee visa category groups are eligible to the full range of available IHSS settlement services and refugee entitlements.
- That all asylum seeker visa category groups are eligible to the full range of available ASAS reception services and asylum seeker entitlements.

State Government

- In the absence of change to the eligibility requirements, that emergency relief targeting refugees and asylum seekers is made available for assistance to those experiencing housing crisis.

Office of Housing

- That the Office of Housing increase the availability of culturally appropriate housing infrastructure to refugee and asylum seeker communities for local level management.
- That the Office of Housing in collaboration with housing assistance services implement policy guidelines that specify eligibility and assistance for refugees, asylum seekers and other client groups ineligible for income and a Medicare card.
- That the Office of Housing implement client assessment processes that place greater emphasis on criteria that capture refugees and asylum seekers’ special circumstances. This includes increased weighting by client assessments of client history and risk of homelessness.
- That the Office of Housing implement a housing service client outcome measurement system which takes into account additional barriers to outcomes for asylum seeker clients.
- That the Office of Housing in collaboration with the Department of Immigration and Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs appoint a housing establishment worker to assist newly arrived refugees and asylum seekers.

Assistance Services

- That housing assistance services in partnership with primary assistance services ensure equity of access to their services for refugees and asylum seekers.
- That housing assistance services in partnership with primary assistance services explore service exit plan opportunities for refugee and asylum seeker clients experiencing severe restriction from services and rights.
- That crisis and transitional housing assistance services ensure client entry to their services is facilitated by the location of crisis housing personnel at relevant generalist services accessed by refugees and asylum seekers.
References

Asylum Seeker Project (2003), *Welfare Issues and Immigration Outcomes for Asylum Seekers on Bridging Visa E.*


DIMIA (2004), *Form 1024i (Bridging visas).*

DIMIA (2004), *Form 964i (Entry to Australia Offshore Humanitarian Program).*

DIMIA (2004), *Form 681 (Refugee and special humanitarian proposal).*


Horn, Michael (1998), *Hanover Client Special Collection on Refugee and Asylum Seekers.*


Appendices

Appendix A: Profile of Interview Participants

Table A1) provides a profile of the refugee and asylum seeker interview participants. In total 17 interviews were undertaken with refugees and asylum seekers who had engaged in a support relationship with a specialist, housing or generalist support worker and had experience housing crisis in Australia.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant Profile</th>
<th>Participants</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Housing</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private Rental (Shared, non shared)</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>35.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sharing with friends/family (rent free)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>23.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transitional</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>23.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crisis</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Primary Housing support agency</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community funded Specialist</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>23.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Government funded Specialist</td>
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<td>35.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Generalist</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Housing/Homeless</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>35.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Gender</strong></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>35.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>64.7</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Presenting household</strong></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lone person</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>29.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lone person (separated from immediate family)</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>23.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Couple without child/ren</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Couple with child/ren</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>41.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Person with child/ren</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Visa</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bridging (application for asylum in process)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bridging (application for asylum rejected by RRT)</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>23.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TPV</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>17.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PPV (Humanitarian)</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>41.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PPV (Full government support)</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>11.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Refugee Sponsor of Spouse</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Locality Origin</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle East</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>29.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sudanese</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>17.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Horn of Africa</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>11.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asia</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>23.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eastern Europe</td>
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<td>17.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Housing Locality</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inner South/City</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>29.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle South</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>11.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Springvale</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>23.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dandenong</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>35.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table Aii) provides a profile of service worker agencies and service workers participating in interviews or focus groups. In total 21 specialist and generalist agency interviews were undertaken, as well as five focus groups of housing and homeless agency staff teams.

### Table Aii) Agency Participant Profile

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant Profile</th>
<th>Agency Participants N</th>
<th>Interviews/focus groups N</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Target Group</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Income Support</td>
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<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Housing</td>
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<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
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<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Migrant</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cross-section</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Humanitarian Entrants</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TPV's</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asylum Seekers</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Agency Locality</strong></td>
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<td></td>
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<td>Inner South/City</td>
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<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle South</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Springvale</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dandenong</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix B: Refugee and Asylum Seeker Housing Service Questionnaire

Refugee and Asylum Seekers Data Form

SECTION A
PLEASE NOTE: SECTION A REQUIRES WORKER ASSISTANCE

1. Service Name: ..............................................
2. Type of Service: ...........................................
3. Source of Referral: ........................................
4. Contact Date: ..............................................
5. Interpreted Form Required: Yes ☑ No ☐
6. ALPHA CODE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2nd &amp; 3rd</th>
<th>1st &amp; 2nd</th>
<th>Last</th>
<th>M/F for</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>FIRST NAME</td>
<td>SURNAME</td>
<td>SURNAME</td>
<td>MALE OR FEMALE</td>
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7. Which of the following services are NEEDED and PROVIDED to the client? (Please tick as many boxes as apply)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Needed</th>
<th>Provided</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Transport</td>
<td>☐ 8 ☐ 8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Referral to other crisis</td>
<td>☐ 9 ☐ 9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Housing service</td>
<td>☐ 10 ☐ 10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Referral to other transitional housing service</td>
<td>☐ 11 ☐ 11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Referral to employment/training service</td>
<td>☐ 12 ☐ 12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Referral to health/medical service</td>
<td>☐ 13 ☐ 13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Referral to drug/alcohol service</td>
<td>☐ 14 ☐ 14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Referral to torture and trauma service</td>
<td>☐ 15 ☐ 15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Referral to domestic violence service</td>
<td>☐ 16 ☐ 16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Referral to Settlement service</td>
<td>☐ 17 ☐ 17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>☐ 18 ☐ 18</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

SECTION B

1. WHAT IS YOUR GENDER? (Please tick one box)
   Female ☐ 1
   Male ☐ 2

2. WHAT IS YOUR AGE? 
   Tick box if estimated age: ☐

3. WHAT IS YOUR CURRENT FAMILY UNIT? (Please tick one box)
   Single person ☐ 1
   Person & child(ren) ☐ 2
   Couple only ☐ 3
   Couple with child(ren) ☐ 4
   Other family group ☐ 5

4. HOW MANY ACCOMPANYING CHILDREN DO YOU HAVE? ☐

5. WHAT IS YOUR COUNTRY OF ORIGIN?

6. WHAT DATE DID YOU ARRIVE IN AUSTRALIA? ___ / ___ / ___

7. WHAT IS YOUR VISA CATEGORY? ________________________________

7i. DOES YOUR VISA HAVE AN EXPIRY DATE? ☐

   Yes ☑ No ☐ If no please go to question 8.

7iii. WHAT IS YOUR VISA EXPIRY DATE? ___ / ___ / ___

8. AT WHAT STAGE OF DETERMINATION IS YOUR REFUGEE STATUS? (Please tick one box)
   ☐ 1 DIMIA
   ☐ 2 Refugee Review Tribunal
   ☐ 3 Fed. Court
   ☐ 4 High Court
   ☐ 5 Minister
   ☐ 6 Permanent Protection Visa Granted
8ii). DO/DID YOU HAVE LEGAL REPRESENTATION ASSISTING YOUR REFUGEE APPLICATION?
☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Not Applicable

9. BEFORE ARRIVAL DID YOU HAVE A PROPOSER OR ASSURANCE OF SUPPORT?
☐ Yes ☐ No

10. ARE YOU ELIGIBLE TO WORK?
☐ Yes ☐ No

11i). ARE YOU ELIGIBLE FOR GOVERNMENT ASSISTANCE?
☐ Yes ☐ No If no please go to question 12.

11ii). IF YES WHAT IS YOUR WAITING PERIOD FOR ELIGIBILITY? ________________

12i). WHAT IS YOUR FAMILY’S MAIN SOURCE OF INCOME?
(Please tick one or more boxes)
- No income
- Registered/Awaiting benefit
- Newstart
- Parenting Payment
- Disability Support Pension
- Sickness Allowance
- Youth Allowance – Jobsearch
- Youth Allowance – Studying
- Austudy 25 years
- Abstudy
- Age Pension
- Special Benefit
- Wages/salary/own business
- Part-time wage/casual work
- Red Cross ASAS
- Living Assistance (ASP)

13i). DO YOU EXPERIENCE ANY OF THE FINANCIAL ISSUES LISTED BELOW?
(Please tick the appropriate box)
- Proposer arrangements broken down
- Travel costs to repay
- Supporting family members overseas
- Waiting period for Government Assistance
- Cost Associated with Refugee Status determination
- Other ______________________

14i). WHAT IS YOUR OF CURRENT TYPE OF ACCOMMODATION?
(Please tick the appropriate box)
- Renting – private rental
- Renting – public housing
- Staying with friends or family
- Caravan, boarding house, rooming house, hotel
- Church/community housing
- Shared
- Nowhere to stay

14ii). HOW LONG HAVE YOU STAYED IN YOUR CURRENT ACCOMMODATION? ________________

15. WHAT ARE THE REASONS FOR YOUR HOUSING DIFFICULTY?
- Unsuitable size or location
- Evicted
- Unable to pay rent due to change in circumstances
- Family conflict/violence
- Other ______________________

16i). ARE YOU STAYING IN TRANSITIONAL ACCOMMODATION?
☐ Yes ☐ No If no please go to question 16.

16ii). HOW LONG DO YOU EXPECT TO STAY IN TRANSITIONAL ACCOMMODATION? ________________

16iii). WHAT IS YOUR PROPOSED EXIT POINT FROM TRANSITIONAL ACCOMMODATION?

17. WHAT SPECIAL NEEDS DO YOU HAVE?
- Language/cultural barriers
- Large family
- Torture and Trauma
- Physical health
- Other ______________________

13ii). WHAT OTHER FINANCIAL ISSUES DO YOU EXPERIENCE?
1. ____________________________________________
2. ____________________________________________
Appendix C: Refugee and Asylum Seeker Housing Service Pilot Questionnaire

Refugee and Asylum Seekers Data Form

| Service Name: ______________________________ | Type of Service: ______________________________ |
| Source of Referral: __________________________ |

| Contact Date: / / | Interpreter required: Yes [ ] No [ ] |

1. **GENDER:**
   - Female [ ]
   - Male [ ]

2. **AGE:** [ ] years
   - Tick box if estimated age: [ ]

3. **PRESENTING FAMILY UNIT:**
   - Single person [ ]
   - Person & child(ren) [ ]
   - Couple only [ ]
   - Couple with child(ren) [ ]
   - Other family group [ ]

4. **NO. OF ACCOMPANYING CHILDREN:** [ ]

5i). **COUNTRY OF ORIGIN:** ____________________________
5ii). **LAST COUNTRY OF RESIDENCE:** ____________________________

6. **DATE OF ARRIVAL IN AUSTRALIA:** / /

7. **VISA CATEGORY:** ____________________________

7i). **EXPIRY DATE:** / /

8. **REFUGEE DETERMINATION STAGE:**
   - DIMIA [ ]
   - Fed. Court [ ]
   - Refugee Review [ ]
   - Minister [ ]
   - High Court [ ]
   - Tribunal [ ]

8i). **LEGAL REPRESENTATION:**
   - Yes [ ]
   - No [ ]

8ii). **OTHER FINANCIAL ISSUES:**
   - Proposor arrangements broken down [ ]
   - Travel costs to repay [ ]

9. **PROPOSOR OR ASSURANCE OF SUPPORT BEFORE ARRIVAL:**
   - Yes [ ]
   - No [ ]

10. **ELIGIBLE TO WORK:**
   - Yes [ ]
   - No [ ]

11i). **ELIGIBLE FOR GOVERNMENT ASSISTANCE:**
   - Yes [ ]
   - No [ ]

11ii). **WAITING PERIOD FOR ELIGIBILITY:**

12i). **MAIN INCOME SOURCE:**
   - No income [ ]
   - Registered/Awaiting benefit [ ]
   - Newstart [ ]
   - Parenting Payment [ ]
   - Disability Support Pension [ ]
   - Sickness Allowance [ ]
   - Youth Allowance – Jobsearch [ ]
   - Youth Allowance – Studying [ ]
   - Austudy 25 years [ ]
   - Abstudy [ ]
   - Age Pension [ ]
   - Special Benefit [ ]
   - Wages/salary/own business [ ]
   - Part-time wage/casual work [ ]
   - Red Cross ASAS [ ]
   - Living Assistance (ASP) [ ]

12ii). **OTHER FINANCIAL ISSUES:**
   - (Please tick the appropriate box)
Supporting family members overseas

☐ Yes ☐ No

Cost Associated with Refugee Status determination

☐ Yes ☐ No

Other ____________________________

13i). CURRENT ACCOMMODATION:
(Please tick the appropriate box)

Renting – private rental ☐ 1
Renting – public housing ☐ 2
Staying with friends or family ☐ 3
Caravan, boarding house, rooming house, hotel ☐ 4
Church/community housing ☐ Yes ☐ No
Shared ☐ 5

Nowhere to stay ☐ 6

13ii). HOW LONG AT THIS ADDRESS:

☐ yrs ☐ wks ☐ days

14. REASON FOR HOUSING DIFFICULTY:

Unsuitable size or location ☐ 1
Evicted ☐ 2
Unable to pay rent due to change in circumstances ☐ 3
Family conflict/violence ☐ 4
Other ____________________________ ☐ 5

15. TRANSITIONAL ACCOMMODATION:

Anticipated length of stay

☐ yrs ☐ wks ☐ days

Proposed Exit Point ______________________

16. SERVICES NEEDED & PROVIDED:
(Please tick as many boxes as apply)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Needed</th>
<th>Provided</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Purchase of crisis accommodation</td>
<td>☐ 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assistance with payment of long-term accommodation costs</td>
<td>☐ 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Locating accommodation</td>
<td>☐ 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Housing information/advice</td>
<td>☐ 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Counselling/support</td>
<td>☐ 5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Advocacy ☐ 6 ☐ 6
Financial assistance (non-housing) ☐ 7 ☐ 7
Transport ☐ 8 ☐ 8
Referral to other crisis ☐ 9 ☐ 9

Housing service…………………………
Referral to other transitional housing service…………………………
Referral to employment/ training service…………………………
Referral to health/ medical service…………………………
Referral to drug/ alcohol service…………………………
Referral to a torture and trauma service…………………………
Referral to domestic violence service…………………………
Referral to Settlement service…………………………
Other…………………………

17. SPECIAL NEEDS:

Language/cultural barriers ☐
Large family ☐
Torture and Trauma ☐
Physical health ☐
Other…………………………
Appendix D: Refugee and Asylum Seeker Interview Schedule

CLIENT INTERVIEW FORM

First we are going to collect some background details.

1. Gender:
   - Male
   - Female

2. What is your age? ...........yrs

3. What is your Country of Origin?
   ............................................

4. Are you:
   - Single
   - Defacto
   - Married or
   - Divorced/Separated

5. Do you have children?
   If yes how many?
   Number of children ..........

6. If you have a partner or children
   6a). Is your partner living with you in Australia?
   - Yes
   - No
   If not, where do they live?.........
   ............................................

6b). Are your children living with you in Australia?
   - Yes
   - No
   If not, where do they live?.........
   ............................................

7. What is your level of education?
   - Primary
   - Secondary
   - University
   - Other .................................

8. Do you possess any formal skills or qualifications? If yes, what are they?
   ..................................................................................................................
   ..................................................................................................................

9. What was your occupation in your country of origin?
   ............................................

10. What languages do you speak?
    ..................................................................................................................
    ..................................................................................................................
    ..................................................................................................................

11. What countries did you live in before coming to Australia?
    ..................................................................................................................
    ..................................................................................................................
    ..................................................................................................................

12. What date did you arrive in Australia? 
    / /

13. What is your Visa Category
    ..........................................................
14. Did you have assurance of support before arrival?
   □ Yes  □ No

If yes, Did you have a proposer?………
Could you give some details about that …………………………………
………………………………………

15. Are you Eligible to Work:
   □ Yes  □ No

If no what is your waiting period of eligibility?………………

16. Are you Eligible for government assistance?  □ Yes  □ No

If no what is your waiting period of eligibility?………………

17. What is your Main Income Source?
   □ No Income
   □ Disability Support
   □ Parenting Payment
   □ Newstart
   □ Youth Allowance
   □ Red Cross ASAS
   □ Age Pension
   □ Austudy/Abstudy
   □ P/T Wages/casual
   □ Sickness
   □ Registered/Awaiting Benefit
   □ Special Benefit
   □ Asylum Seeker Project Living Assistance
   □ F/T Wages/salary/own business

18. Do you have Other Financial Issues?
   □ Travel Costs
   □ Support Arrangements Broken Down
   □ Supporting Family Members Overseas?
   □ Refugee Determination Costs
   □ Other?…………………………
   ………………………………………
   ………………………………………
   ………………………………………

19. Do you have Special Needs?
   □ Language/cultural barriers?
   □ Large Family?
   □ Torture and Trauma
   □ Physical Health/Disability?
   □ Other?…………………………
   ………………………………………
   ………………………………………
   ………………………………………

SECTION 2: HOUSING HISTORY

Now we are going to talk about your housing situation.

20. Do you have any special housing requirements? (size, location, etc)
   ………………………………………
   ………………………………………

21a). Where did you first live in Australia?
   (city or town)
   ………………………………………

21b). In which type of accommodation did you stay?
   □ On-Arrival Accommodation
   □ Private rental
   □ Public rental
   □ Owner occupied
   □ Boarding house/rooming house/hostel/hotel

21c). Did you share accommodation?
   □ No
   □ Yes, with family or friends
   □ Yes, with others you did not know

If yes how many people did you share with? …………

22. Why did you leave?………………
   ………………………………………
   ………………………………………
   ………………………………………
   ………………………………………
23. Where else have you lived and for how long?
   Place…………………………………
   Length of time…………………………

   Place…………………………………
   Length of time…………………………

   Place…………………………………
   Length of time…………………………

   Place…………………………………
   Length of time…………………………

   Place…………………………………
   Length of time…………………………

24. How many times have you moved in the past year? ……………
   Reason for moves?……………………
   ………………………………………
   ………………………………………
   ………………………………………
   ………………………………………
   ………………………………………
   ………………………………………

25a). What are the features of your accommodation now?………………
   ………………………………………
   ………………………………………
   ………………………………………
   ………………………………………
   ………………………………………

25b). How long have you lived at this address?………………
   ………………………………………
   ………………………………………
   ………………………………………
   ………………………………………
   ………………………………………

26. Are there any problems with your current housing situation? What are they?…………………………
   ………………………………………
   ………………………………………
   ………………………………………
   ………………………………………
   ………………………………………

27. What difficulties have you had finding appropriate housing?……
   ………………………………………
   ………………………………………
   ………………………………………
   ………………………………………
   ………………………………………

28a). Have you received any assistance in finding Housing?
   □ Yes □ No

28b). Who helped you?………………
   ………………………………………
   ………………………………………
   ………………………………………
   ………………………………………
   ………………………………………
29. How could your housing assistance be improved?

………………………………………
………………………………………
………………………………………
………………………………………
………………………………………
………………………………………
………………………………………

30. In an ideal world, where would you like to live?

………………………………………
………………………………………
………………………………………
………………………………………
………………………………………
………………………………………
………………………………………
………………………………………

31. When was the last time you felt at home?

………………………………………
………………………………………
………………………………………
………………………………………
………………………………………
………………………………………
………………………………………
………………………………………

SECTION 3: GENERAL

Now we are going to ask you about your general needs.

32. Which of the following do you currently need help with?

☐ Health……………………………
☐ Employment……………………
☐ Education………………………..
☐ Income security…………………
☐ Social support…………………..

33. Who is helping you?……………

………………………………………
………………………………………
………………………………………
………………………………………
………………………………………
………………………………………
………………………………………
………………………………………
………………………………………
………………………………………
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………………………………………
………………………………………
………………………………………

Now we are going to ask you about your general needs.
Appendix E: Generalist Worker Interview Schedule

SPECIALIST AGENCY INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

1. Name of Service_____________________________________________________

2. Type of Service_____________________________________________________

3. Location____________________________________________________________

4. Target Group(s)_____________________________________________________

5. Eligibility Criteria: not accepted? Referred? Provided with services?
_________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________

The Client Group

6. Generally, how would you describe the housing needs of your clients who are refugees, including those from New Zealand, humanitarian entrants, TPV’s or asylum seekers?
_________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________

7. Do those needs differ by visa category?
_________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________

8. What are the short as opposed to medium and long-term issues?
Short
_________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________

Medium
_________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________

Long
_________________________________________________________________

9. What proportion of your clients are homeless?
_________________________________________________________________
Have nowhere to stay?
Staying with family and friends?
Moving around within their community?
In overcrowded or inappropriate shared accommodation?

10. Do they have other housing needs, i.e. large families, locational issues? financial issues?

11. Perceptions of special risks for this group? Barriers?

Service response

12. What does your service provide?

13. Where do you refer people for other help?

14. Who do you refer to the THM? Why? (Outcomes sought?)

15. Who do you refer to SAAP agencies? Why? (Outcomes sought?)
16. How successful are referrals to housing and homeless agencies?

_____________________________________________________________________

_____________________________________________________________________

_____________________________________________________________________

_____________________________________________________________________

17. Is there a client group that has greater difficulty/success than other client groups accessing THM services?

_____________________________________________________________________

_____________________________________________________________________

_____________________________________________________________________

_____________________________________________________________________

18. Is there a client group that has greater difficulty/success than other client groups accessing SAAP services?

_____________________________________________________________________

_____________________________________________________________________

_____________________________________________________________________

_____________________________________________________________________

19. Does the success of your referrals influence who you refer and where you refer your client?

_____________________________________________________________________

_____________________________________________________________________

_____________________________________________________________________

_____________________________________________________________________

20. Any other referral difficulties? Systemic blockages?

_____________________________________________________________________

_____________________________________________________________________

_____________________________________________________________________

_____________________________________________________________________

21. Can you suggest ways your agency might work more effectively with THM’s and SAAP agencies? Examples of best practice?

_____________________________________________________________________

_____________________________________________________________________

_____________________________________________________________________

_____________________________________________________________________

_____________________________________________________________________

_____________________________________________________________________

_____________________________________________________________________

_____________________________________________________________________
General

22. What do you see as the main causes of homelessness for this client group (refugees and asylum seekers?)

_____________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________

23. How can this group best be assisted? How their access to housing be improved?

_____________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________


Appendix F: Housing Worker Focus Group Schedule

FOCUS GROUP SCHEDULE

1. Name of Service_____________________________________________________

2. Type of Service_____________________________________________________

3. Location____________________________________________________________

4. Target Group(s) _____________________________________________________

5. Main agencies referring refugees, humanitarian entrants, TPV’s and asylum seekers?
   ___________________________________________________________________
   ___________________________________________________________________

The Client Group
6. Generally, how would you describe the needs of this group of clients, including any
   special needs you are aware of?
   ___________________________________________________________________
   ___________________________________________________________________
   ___________________________________________________________________
   ___________________________________________________________________
   ___________________________________________________________________
   ___________________________________________________________________
   ___________________________________________________________________
   ___________________________________________________________________

7. Short-term versus long-term issues?
   ___________________________________________________________________
   ___________________________________________________________________
   ___________________________________________________________________
   ___________________________________________________________________
   ___________________________________________________________________
   ___________________________________________________________________
   ___________________________________________________________________
   ___________________________________________________________________

8. Are there particular barriers/risks for this client group?
   ___________________________________________________________________
   ___________________________________________________________________
9. Generally, what would you say the main causes of homelessness for this client group are?

_____________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________

Service response

12. How does your service address the needs of this group of clients?

_____________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________

13. Any special policies, practices for this group?

_____________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________

14. What difficulties does your service have in addressing the needs of this client group?

_____________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________

15. Does work with this client group raise special issues for your service, i.e. what is the impact of work with this client group on individual workers? On the service as a whole, i.e. time, bottlenecks, financial issues?

_____________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________

16. Does your service work effectively with the specialist agencies who refer refugees and asylum seekers?
17. Can you suggest ways in which that relationship might be improved? Examples of best practice?

_____________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________

General
19. Generally, what are the main causes of homelessness among this client group?

_____________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________

20. How can their access to housing be improved?

_____________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________

Can you suggest other ways to prevent homelessness for this group?

_____________________________________________________________________

_____________________________________________________________________

_____________________________________________________________________

_____________________________________________________________________

_____________________________________________________________________

_____________________________________________________________________

_____________________________________________________________________