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| Support for people seeking asylum |
| December 2023 |
| OFFICIAL |

## Background

Despite demonstrating strength and resourcefulness, people seeking asylum are one of the most disadvantaged groups in our community.

People seeking asylum are more likely to experience poorer health and wellbeing outcomes than the general population, including due to experiences of destitution, mental health impacts of war-related trauma and separation from family, and limitations in healthcare accessibility.

Most people seeking asylum are ineligible for Commonwealth income and casework support or a low-income Health Care Card. Some do not have work rights or access to Medicare.

An estimated 13,000 – 20,000 people seeking asylum may currently reside in Victoria, with many reliant on Victorian Government support to meet basic health and wellbeing needs.

## Budget commitment

The Victorian Government continues to commit more than $4 million in 2023 – 24 to address asylum seeker destitution and vulnerability, extending on $4 million committed in 2022 – 23, $3.9 million in 2020 – 21 and 2021 – 22, and $3 million in 2019 – 20. The funds deliver crisis support and enable specialist asylum seeker agencies to strengthen referral partnerships with other Victorian Government services.

## Services funded through this budget commitment

The following essential services are supported through this budget commitment:

* general practice and financial assistance for pharmaceuticals and diagnostic testing in Community Health, especially for people who are ineligible for Medicare
* mental health support including to assist with distress related to the asylum-seeking process and past trauma
* case coordination providing a supportive point of contact for people in crisis, conducting assessments of needs and strengths, and connecting people with essential services and supports
* basic needs and utilities assistance so people seeking asylum without income or savings can cover the cost of essential expenses such as food, medication, and utilities
* homelessness assistance so that people seeking asylum can remain in secure housing, allowing them to continue to manage their health and wellbeing and pursue employment.

These funds have boosted the capacity of specialist asylum seeker programs located in the communities where most people seeking asylum live. Assistance can generally be provided via funded agencies to people seeking asylum who live in other locations, including in rural and regional Victoria.

People seeking asylum can also receive free assistance from all Victorian Government funded health services, including at Community Health Services and [Hospitals](https://www.health.vic.gov.au/publications/hospital-access-for-people-seeking-asylum) < https://www.health.vic.gov.au/publications/hospital-access-for-people-seeking-asylum >.

## For further information or to access support

For general information and support, and to be assessed for eligibility for basic needs assistance, case coordination support and homelessness assistance contact:

* **Red Cross Migration Support Programs**

03 8327 7370/ 1800 855 240 **(Southeast, North)**

* **Asylum Seeker Resource Centre (West)**

03 9326 6066

* **Launch Housing**

03 8327 7370

For specialist mental health support contact:

* **Monash Health Refugee Health and Wellbeing (Southeast)**

03 9792 8100 and request the Refugee Health Nurse on Triage

* **Cabrini Asylum Seeker and Refugee Health Hub (North, West)**

03 9508 7000

* **The Victorian Foundation for Survivors of Torture (Foundation House) (Southeast, North, West)**

03 9389 8900

GP healthcare services being boosted through this funding can be accessed at:

* **Monash Health Refugee Health and Wellbeing**

03 9792 8100 (request the Refugee Health Nurse on Triage)

* **IPC Health**

1300 472 432

* **Cohealth**

Fitzroy – 03 9448 5531

Collingwood – 03 9448 5528

Innerspace – 03 9448 5530

Kensington – 03 9448 5537

Footscray – 03 9448 5502

Laverton – 03 9448 5534

* **Primary Care Connect**

03 58233200

For enquiries about this budget commitment or how Victorian Government services assist people seeking asylum, contact Diversity and Access at the Department of Health at diversity@health.vic.gov.au.

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