

ARC Conversation Starters Suite



Conversation starters
and information
for stakeholders
engaging with asylum
seekers and refugees.

[VIEW TOPICS](#)



ARC Conversation Starters Suite

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Conversation starters and information for stakeholders engaging with asylum seekers and refugees.

GO TO OVERVIEW

"Most migrants are resilient, innovative, resourceful and find ways to focus on the positive even in darker days. Feeling unwelcome, unwanted or feared can put up even more barriers to settlement and inclusion."
Judy S, CEO ARC

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ARC Conversation Starters Suite



Conversation starters and information for stakeholders engaging with asylum seekers and refugees.

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This suite presents discussion topics across key areas with which asylum seekers and refugees require support during settlement phases in Australia.



VIEW TOPICS

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ARC Conversation Starters Suite



Emergency Relief Program

Employment

Food Security

Health

Housing

Additional research support and information

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Additional Information

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ARC Conversation Starters Suite



Emergency Relief
Program

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TOGGLE BETWEEN TWO VIEWS



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Throughout 2016 Red Cross provided Emergency Relief support to more than 2,100 people including those seeking protection, refugees and other migrants, in times of urgent need.

The Red Cross Emergency Relief Program was created in 2002 to provide support to people frequently at risk of poverty, malnutrition and social isolation.

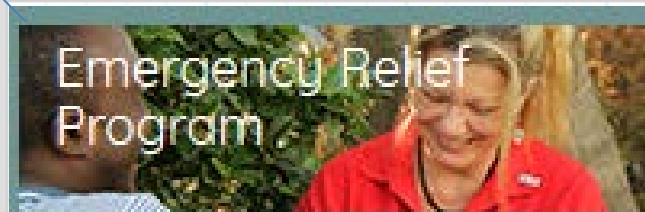
Since this vital program started, Red Cross staff and volunteers have assisted more than 12,000 people across Australia.

As the country's only nationwide emergency relief provider specifically supporting migrants in crisis, Red Cross adapts the program to the urgent needs in each state and territory to deliver the support to people who need it most.

Our Emergency Relief program provides vital insight into emerging vulnerabilities faced by people in the community.

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In 2016:

- Red Cross provided assistance to more than 2,100 people in the form of financial and material support including food vouchers, basic household items, school supplies, medical expenses, accommodation support and utility bills.
- Deprivation of the 'basics' was the principle driver for people seeking emergency relief, representing the primary need in over half of all presentations.¹

¹ Food, clothing or transport support. This also includes material items that are essential to ensuring a safe and suitable living environment, such as blankets, bedding or baby items.

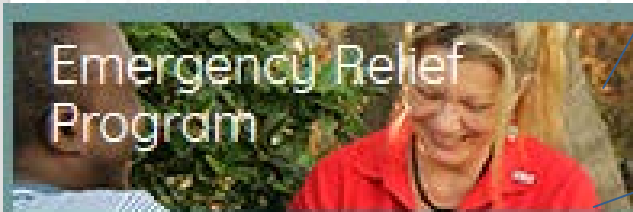
- Financial costs associated with sending children to school or the supply of nappies and clothes for infants were issues for 40 percent of families we worked with.

The majority of people who sought support from Red Cross Emergency Relief in 2016 were people who had submitted a request for government support or people who had received an adverse decision regarding an application for protection and were struggling to meet their basic needs while awaiting the outcome.

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ER - PAGE 3

[RETURN TO TOPICS](#)[MAKE A BOOKING](#)**Who accesses Emergency Relief (ER)?**

Red Cross Migration Support Programs will provide ER support to anyone who becomes vulnerable as a result of migration. Our data shows that the majority of people who are accessing emergency relief through our program include:

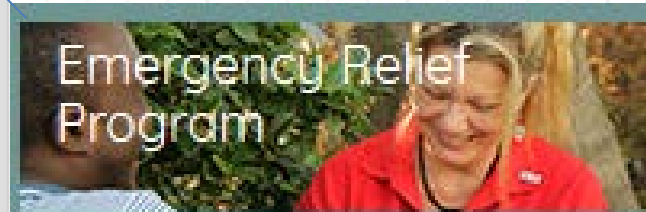
- Recipients of a Bridging Visa E (BVE) – usually people seeking protection who arrived by boat and have spent time in immigration detention facilities.

- People who arrived by air with a valid visa and have then sought protection.
- People who have had an initial claim for protection refused and are having that decision reviewed in the Federal Circuit Court.
- People who are considered to be on a 'return pathway'² to their home countries.

Visa conditions may mean people cannot legally work, access Centrelink, Medicare or access other government assistance.

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Eligibility requirements for government assistance via the Status Resolution Support Services (SRSS) program are strict and there can be long waiting periods. For those without a reliable source of alternative income and with no access to formal safety nets, the situation can become very serious, very quickly.

² People who have been determined by the Administrative Appeals tribunal as not meeting Australia's protection obligations.

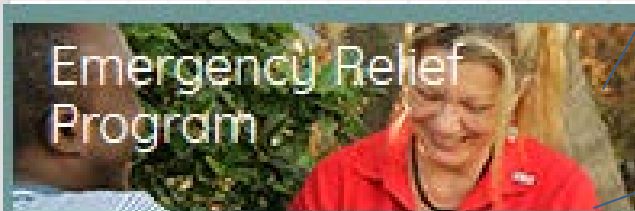
What support does Red Cross provide via Emergency Relief?

Red Cross Emergency Relief helps to support the most vulnerable in the community by providing vouchers for essential items, material aid and one off cash payments. We organise referrals and transport assistance and support people to address their health needs.

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Some examples of Emergency Relief Red Cross has provided include:

- Food packages to individuals and families who would otherwise go hungry in Western Australia.
- Donated household setup goods for a family in need or a refurbished bicycle to help an asylum seeker to be independent, self-reliant and healthy in Victoria.

- Cooking classes and gardening workshops to help with budgeting and healthy eating in South Australia.
- Transport vouchers to access English classes to help engage people in their communities in Northern Territory.
- Engaging dentists to donate their time to ensure dental health, or providing donated winter clothing, blankets and toys to children and families in New South Wales.

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"If there were no humanitarian organisations, it would be very hard for us to survive these circumstances. They are looking after us and that is a great help at the moment."

Australian Red Cross
Emergency Relief Client

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Employment - PAGE 1



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"This is a very difficult situation because I don't want to ask for help from the same people every time. If I am able to work, then I could be the one to provide money for my children, and rent, and food but I can't work because I am not allowed to work."

Red Cross Emergency
Relief Client

Red Cross has seen first-hand the positive impact on people who are able to actively engage in employment.

Not only do their financial circumstances and quality of living improve, employment gives people greater self-confidence and sense of purpose and broadens social connections in the community.

Who has work rights in Australia?

Not all people seeking protection are allowed to work. Permission to work is dependent on how a person comes to Australia and the type of visa they held at the time of entry.

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Most people who arrived by boat and who are currently on a Bridging Visa are now granted permission to work. The right to work for other people with a Bridging Visa is dependent on the conditions of the visa they entered Australia with. If you came to Australia on a student visa and then could not return home due to a crisis in your home country, you'll only be allowed to work 20 hours per week. If you came to Australia on a Visitor Visa, typically you will not be allowed to work.

Even with work rights, people still face barriers.

A number of people we supported through. Emergency relief indicated that they were experiencing work-related issues. Issues ranged from labour exploitation concerns to help obtaining employment separation certificates. For these reasons people can be at risk of becoming involved in unsafe work and exploitative relationships with employers exposing them to:

- unpaid or underpaid work;
- lengthy hours; and
- poor or unsafe work conditions.

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Food Security - PAGE 1



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What is food security?

Food security exists where people have regular, affordable and sustainable access to safe, nutritionally adequate, culturally acceptable food from non-emergency sources.

"Food security is about more than food; access to healthy food. It is also about self-determination, social confidence and personal worth."

Red Cross Internal Food Security Review, 2011.

A Red Cross survey found that almost 40 percent of people seeking protection had experienced food insecurity in the preceding 12 months, principally because of the cost of household bills and low incomes. Food relief presented as one of the most consistent needs of Red Cross' Emergency Relief program in 2016.

People accessing Red Cross Emergency Relief support have reported that to get by they have used one or more of the following coping strategies:

- Eating less or, eating fewer meals
- Receiving food or money from friends
- Sourcing emergency food packages
- Selling personal items

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Food Security - PAGE 2



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- Limiting phone calls to their families overseas
- Growing their own food
- Eating poorer quality and a limited variety of food
- Eating less so that children can have a larger share.

Barriers to food security

Red Cross works with communities, governments and networks with other partners to promote better access to healthy food.

We know that the largest barriers to community food security are systemic and structural issues such as inadequate access to appropriate housing and income, and Red Cross is committed to focusing its work on addressing the underlying issues.

Making food affordable is not just about being low-cost or cost-effective. It is both the ability to pay without suffering hardship and to be able to purchase at an adequate level to meet individual or household needs.

In this context, food items are considered affordable if the individual can afford to meet all their basic living costs after purchase.

Through our Emergency Relief program, Red Cross is aware of the following personal and structural barriers that can impact on a person's food security:

- Finite resources of charitable organisations and increase in requested emergency relief services.

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Health - PAGE 1

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In 2016:

- The Red Cross ER program provided support to 259 people experiencing medical issues. Depending on the need, support can take the form of specialist's referrals, costs of medicine or chemist vouchers.
- Sixty-three percent of people seeking health-related support were seeking protection and awaiting results of a government application, 30% were seeking protection on a return pathway, and 7% were ineligible.

- Eighty-five percent of people seeking support reported that in order to meet the costs of managing their medical needs they were struggling to meet the costs of utilities and other bills, public transport, or rent.
- Eighty percent of people reported that they were unable to financially manage their health issues independently.
- One in three people were seeking support for concerns regarding their mental health.
- Seventy-two percent of people living with a mental illness sought support for financial assistance with the purchasing of essential medication.

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Access to health services is a particular issue for migrants in transition, due to a number of barriers:

- Not all people are able to access Medicare while their visa application is being determined.
- Although primary health needs are typically met by state and territory governments, it is the out-of-hospital health care costs, such as rehabilitation or ongoing medications, that are generally not covered.
- People are ineligible for a Health Care Card, so often face significant financial difficulties meeting out-of-pocket expenses for items like medicines, and pathology consults.

- People living with chronic health problems can find that their health needs cannot be adequately managed due to prohibitive costs.
- The out-of-pocket expenses for people who do have Medicare benefits can still be prohibitive due to the high risk of poverty in this group.
- There are community based organisations providing health clinics for people without Medicare rights, but these typically do not have the resources to meet the demand.

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"The hardest part we found when looking for a place to rent or a job is to secure character references. It is very hard to get character references when you have been in the country for such a short time, and you only know very limited number of people. In these situations if you cannot find support, you are basically stuck and at the risk of becoming homeless."

Red Cross Emergency Relief Client

What is the issue?

While housing access and affordability issues are an area of significant concern for all low income earners, there are additional barriers such as language, income and support for those who have recently arrived. This group is at significant disadvantage when competing for increasingly limited private rental properties.

Why is this an issue?

Housing affordability is a hallmark issue faced by migrants experiencing vulnerability. Poverty is just one factor that can lead to homelessness. Homelessness includes utilising crisis accommodation, boarding and rooming houses; couch surfing and other informal housing – it does not always mean someone is sleeping rough.

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There are many reasons that people become homeless: sudden loss of employment; women fleeing domestic violence; experience of trauma or struggles with mental health.

In 2016:

- 1,325 people who accessed Red Cross Emergency Relief reported being in a situation of housing stress. Of this group, 535 people presented as homeless.
- 86% of those seeking support for housing stress or homelessness had no source of independent income.

- Red Cross is also aware of people (who may not consider themselves to be homeless) who are subjected to situations of secondary¹ and tertiary homelessness² which includes:

- sleeping in their car, staying with friends or
- family, living in a refuge and rough sleeping.

¹ Secondary homelessness: Someone who moves around a lot or "couch surfs", temporarily staying with relatives or friends or in emergency accommodation.

² Tertiary homelessness: Someone who shares space in a private boarding house, in which minimal housing standards are not met. People often share a communal bathroom or kitchen and live without the certainty of a lease arrangement.

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For more information
or to make a booking

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power of
humanity



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This suite presents discussion topics across key areas
with which asylum seekers and refugees require
support during settlement phases in Australia.

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For more information about these resources,
please email - **National Program Coordinator**

To book a facilitator,
please email
**National Capacity
Building Coordinator**

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