



Drop the debate, new arrivals are here and need urgent support

Per capita, Australia is ranking poorly when it comes to the intake of people from refugee and asylum-seeking backgrounds. In 2015 Australia was ranked 25th overall, 32nd per capita and 47th relative to total National Gross Domestic Product (GDP)¹. America, accepts over seven times as many people as we do. What's worse, we've made it acceptable for other countries to have the same poor attitude towards people from a refugee or asylum-seeking background.

Refugees and asylum seekers. The question is no longer whether we will take them in or not, it's how they deserve to be treated now they are here. Collectively, let's drop the debate about whether we should help refugees and people seeking asylum, and accept our global responsibility to support our new arrivals.

After leaving everything they have worked for behind, some escaping war-torn countries, some being held in detention for months, many people find it daunting to navigate a complex private rental system, often with very limited basic income support. Whichever way they find a house, the latest research from [Flinders University](#)² confirms that the accommodation will likely be too expensive, too small, in bad condition, in a neighbourhood far from friends and family, and have no heating or cooling.

Researchers from Flinders University found that the participants they spoke with who had suitable accommodation had overall better mental health and wellbeing than others. They were able to start their lives, find employment and give back to the community more so than those who were living in poor conditions. People want to work, they want to give back to the community, so we must help support them get to the point where they no longer need to stress about housing and can focus on rebuilding their lives and contributing to the community.

Three in four research participants reported experiencing at least one problem with their current housing and some people were living in very difficult circumstances. This is unacceptable, and urgent action is required to improve the housing situation for new arrivals.

Many of the issues uncovered by the Flinders research team could be avoided during the process of finding suitable housing. First of all, there needs to be an increase in affordable housing available for all citizens, including new arrivals. This can be done through policy change and making new arrivals

¹ Refugee Council of Australia (2015), *UNHCR Global Trends 2015 – How Australia compares with the world* <<https://www.refugeecouncil.org.au/getfacts/statistics/unchr2015/>>

²Ziersch, A., Due, C., Walsh, M., Arthurson, K. (2017) *Belonging begins at home: Housing, social inclusion and health and wellbeing for people from refugee and asylum-seeking backgrounds*. Flinders Press, Adelaide.

eligible for public housing. Greater assistance to navigate the private rental market by real estate agents and community service providers would make the process of finding a house easier.

It makes economic sense to support people from a refugee or asylum-seeking background from the moment they arrive. A few simple changes would ease the housing situation of vulnerable people. We are tired of hearing arguments about social housing as the right of one minority group over another. We need a social housing system with the capacity to house all vulnerable people living in South Australia.

Shelter SA is working to demand better conditions and support for refugees and asylum seekers from Local, State and Commonwealth governments, real estate agents and housing providers.