



HOTHAM MISSION Asylum Seeker Project



About the Project:

The Asylum Seeker Project (ASP) is based at Hotham Mission in Melbourne and works with asylum seekers in the community lawfully awaiting an outcome on their refugee or humanitarian claim, yet denied the right to work, welfare payments or Medicare. Homelessness, health, nutrition, isolation and depression are all major concerns for asylum seekers in the community.

They provide free housing, casework and volunteer support, pay for emergencies and provide monthly cash relief. Without this support, many asylum seekers would be at risk of becoming homeless, having no means by which to survive or support themselves in the community.

Our Partnership:

This Province has had a partnership with the ASP since 2003. We have signed an Inter-Agency Agreement allowing the use of a property in West Footscray in which to house community based asylum seekers facing homelessness. Since the initial agreement, three single male asylum seekers have been housed in this property (from Burma, Angola and Russia). A family of five from Sri Lanka has also lived there and recently received news that they have finally been granted permanent visas to remain in Australia.

The Future:

This year, Temporary Protection Visas (TPVs) will be abolished. This means that all applicants for a protection visa who are found to engage Australia's protection obligations will receive a Permanent Protection visa (PPV). The government is committed to certain outcomes for refugees and abolishing TPVs. This is a commitment to treating asylum seekers fairly and with dignity.

TPVs were introduced by the previous government to discourage people smuggling activities resulting in unauthorised boat arrivals and to discourage refugees leaving their country of first asylum. The evidence shows TPVs did not have any deterrent effect. In fact, there was an increase in the number of women and children making dangerous journeys to Australia.

Current and former TPV holders still in Australia will have access to a permanent visa. Only health, character and security requirements will need to be met for this visa, and there will be no reassessment of protection claims.

What can you do?

Refer to the following sites for ideas and activities:

Hotham Mission	http://asp.hothammission.org.au/
Asylum Seeker Resource Centre	http://www.asrc.org.au/
Catholic Justice and Peace Commission	http://www.uq.net.au/cjpc/seekers.htm
Asylum Seekers Centre	http://www.asylumseekerscentre.org.au/
GetUp Action for Australia	http://www.getup.org.au/

Poem:

This was written by an asylum seeker who arrived as an unaccompanied 18 year old. He has spent the past 3 years with no work rights, income or Medicare. In the middle of his last year of high school in Victoria, he was refused by the Minister and given 28 days to leave the country. Through some luck and a lot of work, Hotham Mission managed to extend the time he had left in Australia and remarkably, despite all the pressures on him, he completed his high school education.

I am an illegal alien

*Don't know where to go
Or where to stay
Don't even own a bed!
No future ahead
Being homeless made me careless
Too much stress!
Can't even buy my girl a dress.
Don't feel like a man
And I am broke 24/7!
God! I hope there is something better
Waiting for me in Heaven.
Being an Asylum Seeker
And always waiting
For my papers to be accepted!
Even though back home
I am most wanted*

*Sometimes I feel like I'm grounded from
being safe and peace minded.
But thanks to Asylum Seeker Project!
Because of their help
They made me forget
About how people can be so cruel
And ignorant!
But it is O.K.
I am a strong Man
Doing the best I can.
Mama feel my pain.
One day, the rain will end
And a light of sunshine
Will shine on top of my head.*

Sources:

<http://asp.hothammission.org.au/>
http://www.immi.gov.au/refugee/tpv_thv/abolition/index.htm

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Promoter of Justice, Peace and the Integrity of Creation

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