

Impact of cuts to SRSS

- This is why people need the SRSS support to keep alive while they find work and wait for the interminable visa process to finish.

In August 2017, 60 single men and women across Australia were cut off from all support on same day notice.

They had been released from detention into Community detention but on this day, they were given Bridging visas with no support. They had to vacate their shared houses in two weeks.

This included the young women brought down from Nauru after violent attacks and the men from Manus because of need for medical care. Three girls told me how they slept in a car for three nights because they had no money and nowhere to go. The car was parked in the garage of their previous home because they were so scared. They had a friend still in Community Detention and she snuck them in to her house to wash and eat until they were forbidden.

Nine months later they are still struggling to find work. They have each managed to find casual work in factories, shops and cafes but not enough to pay rent.

Most of the work offered to people with Bridging Visas is cash in hand as employers know that they are desperate and take advantage of the situation. These are the facts of life for people on Bridging Visas.

The one thing that people are seeking is work, the most highly sought after is "work with tax", a phrase used to denote legal work. As has been explained to me many times, "if you have work you can stop thinking and worrying as well as eating". The government has so demonised people on bridging visas that once a prospective employer sees the Bridging visa they say no. A young woman who applied for a job, cleaning the public toilets in a large hospital was on track for the job until they asked about her visa status. When she said that she had a BV, they replied sorry we only take citizens or permanent visas.

In August last year, generous groups including the Victorian State Government responded finding safe homes for the single people. We managed then but this tsunami of literally thousands of people made destitute is beyond our capability.

Pamela Curr – 3rd May 2018