

**COVID-19 and people seeking protection in the Australian community:**  
**A Preliminary Discussion Paper**  
**Updated 7 April 2020**

**Summary of concerns:**

- A. The combination of employment losses and the absence of a safety net will generate increases in homelessness and destitution.
- B. People who are homeless will find it harder to self-isolate, and therefore may be at greater risk of contracting and transmitting COVID-19.
- C. People without Medicare or access to a Health Care Card may not be able to access timely health care during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- D. Women on temporary visas are at a particularly higher risk of domestic/family violence during the COVID-19 pandemic.

**Summary of recommendations:**

**Recommendation 1:** JRS Australia calls on the Federal Government to revise eligibility criteria for access to the Status Resolution Support Service (SRSS) program to ensure that all people seeking protection in financial hardship can obtain government-funded temporary financial support, torture and trauma counselling, and casework.

**Recommendation 2:** JRS Australia calls on the Federal Government to provide SRSS financial support at 89% of the new JobSeeker (formerly Newstart) fortnightly payment amount, whilst also providing access to an additional \$550 per fortnight in line with the Coronavirus supplement.

**Recommendation 3:** JRS Australia calls on the Federal Government and NSW Government to consider specific financial and/or in kind support to specialist agencies working with temporary visa holders, including people seeking protection, and refugees on temporary protection visas.

**Recommendation 4:** JRS Australia calls on relevant decision makers, industry groups, and community sector organisations to utilise vacant hotels, motels or available transitional housing services to temporarily accommodate all rough sleepers, people living in overcrowded dwellings, and vulnerable people requiring self-isolation temporarily, including people seeking protection in these circumstances.

**Recommendation 5:** JRS Australia calls on the Federal Government to grant temporary Bridging Visas (BVs) and valid Medicare cards to all people seeking protection residing in the Australian community regardless of status or position in the refugee status determination (RSD) process.

**Recommendation 6:** JRS Australia calls on the Federal Government to ensure that access to affordable medication is made available to people seeking protection in financial hardship, and who are currently ineligible for the PBS. This can be done via a supplement to the SRSS payment.

**Recommendation 7:** JRS Australia welcomes the Federal Government's [\\$150 million support package](#) to support people experiencing domestic, family, and sexual violence due to the impacts of COVID-19, but calls on providers to ensure that people on temporary visas are eligible to access these services.

**Recommendation 8:** JRS Australia supports the Australian Women Against Violence Alliance's (AWAVA) [call](#) for the Federal Government to "provide access for women on temporary visas experiencing violence to Medicare,

all relevant services and income support, including in the event their jobs are lost due to the pandemic.”

**Recommendation 9:** JRS Australia calls on the Federal Government to expand access to free legal advice and representation to all temporary residents, and to provide access to free interpreting services, so that people, including women on temporary visas, can understand their rights and responsibilities and how to stay well during the COVID-19 pandemic.

## A. Background

As of 31 December 2019, there were more than [2.4 million temporary visa holders](#) in Australia. Of these, more than 1.5 million are longer-term temporary residents, including on various forms of skilled, temporary graduate, student, and bridging visas. Whilst some NewZealanders on Special Category (subclass 444) visas are eligible for the Federal Government's [JobKeeper](#) payment, the vast majority of temporary visa holders in Australia do not have access to any form of safety net in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Everyone living in our community should be supported during these extraordinary times. At the very least, it will benefit Australia's overall public health response to COVID-19.

For the purposes of this discussion paper, JRS Australia focuses on the people it serves, namely those seeking protection and living in the Australian community. This paper provides a snapshot of the pre-existing challenges that people seeking protection living in Australia face and outline some of the key impacts of COVID-19 on this group, as emergent on the ground.

There are close to a 100,000 women, children and men seeking protection and living in the Australian community. These include people in three broad groups, namely:

1. those who came to Australia on valid visas and then subsequently applied for protection onshore (so-called 'plane arrivals').
2. those who generally came to Australia without valid visas before and up to July 2013 (so-called 'maritime arrivals') and applied for protection onshore.<sup>1</sup>
3. those who have been medically evacuated to Australia from Manus Island and Nauru, and have been released into community detention (known as 'residence determination') or on a Bridging Visa.

Department of Home Affairs statistics from the end of March/early April 2020 indicate that there are approximately 98,000 people seeking protection in the Australian community.<sup>2</sup>

- [38,678](#) refers to the total number of refugee status determinations awaiting a decision as of 31 March 2020.
- [45,532](#) refers to the total number of individuals that were not granted a Final Protection Visa that have yet to be removed as of 31 March 2020.
- [13,657](#) refers to the total number of people in the Legacy Caseload who have applied for protection onshore and whose applications are on hand at primary stage, review and other, or have been finalised as of 1 April 2020.<sup>3</sup>

JRS Australia works with approximately 5% of the total number of applicants for protection each annum. As the numbers of people affected by COVID-19 at JRS Australia alone demonstrate, the numbers of people seeking protection across Australia who may be affected by COVID-19 in a multitude of ways is significant.

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<sup>1</sup> Many of the individuals in this cohort are part of the Legacy Caseload.

<sup>2</sup> Statistics made available on the Department of Home Affairs (DHA) website as of 31 March 2020 for permanent protection visa applicants (PPV) and as of 1 April 2020 for Legacy Caseload applicants.

<sup>3</sup> Applicants in the Legacy Caseload whose claims have been finalized may also include a number who have departed from Australia. Applicants not granted a Final Protection visa may include people who applied for permanent protection visas who remain in Australia as unlawful non-citizens.

The majority of people seeking protection in the Australian community are on some form of Bridging Visa (BV). The duration of a BV and the conditions attached to it depend on a range of factors. The relevant factors include mode and date of arrival, what stage of the refugee status determination (RSD) process an individual is at, and whether they have been able to access community support to help navigate the process of applying for a new visa and correspond with the Department of Home Affairs (DHA). Decisions on durations and conditions of BVs are made by the Department of Home Affairs, and in some cases, the relevant Minister. A BV may be valid for days, months, or years. It may or may not allow the individual to work or study and may or may not be renewed in a timely fashion upon expiry.

In practice, a person whose protection claims have been rejected by the Department of Home Affairs or the independent merits review tribunals – and there are many thousands in this category - is unlikely to be given a valid BV with work and study rights, and therefore may be living in the community without any form of legal status and associated rights to work, and healthcare.

However, as outlined below, all people seeking protection live in the Australian community without access to a range of fundamental rights and services.

### **B.) Employment losses will generate homelessness and destitution.**

The Australian job market is highly competitive, especially in larger metropolises such as Sydney and Melbourne, where the majority of people seeking protection reside. In this context, people seeking protection with work rights can find it much harder to find employment than the average skilled migrant or Australian citizen. There are a range of additional reasons for this including the challenges of dealing with years of trauma from persecution, dislocation from family and time in detention centres; serious physical health illnesses; employers not recognising short-term BVs; English language fluency or basic literacy; non-recognition of previous qualifications; lack of local experience; racism; and the absence of community connections or networks.

People seeking asylum also do not have access to JobActive support and receive very limited assistance to find employment, including from employment programs in the charity sector with strict eligibility criteria (eg. English language capacity).

Those who do find work are generally employed in casual, often cash-in-hand labour arrangements or as independent subcontractors. In many cases, they are excluded from sick or annual leave entitlements, superannuation payments, and workers compensation. They are already at higher risk of exploitation - through wage theft and forms of emotional and physical abuse - from employers. It should be noted that worldwide, women and girls represent the majority of workers in the informal sector where there is no job security or safety net. Moreover, many people seeking protection are less likely to raise concerns with employers or lodge a complaint with the Fair Work Ombudsman because they are afraid of being re-detained or having visas cancelled.

The spread of COVID-19 has generated significant shocks to the labour market. Unemployment has already skyrocketed and the available employment across many sectors is shrinking. Even in industries – such as food supply chains and supermarkets – where there has been a growth in labour demand, available supply is already far greater.

***Predictably, growing numbers of people seeking protection have lost work owing to periods of self-isolation without pay, and loss of casual work due to business scale-back or closure.*** Most will be less competitive within a market overflowing with skilled, English-speaking talent.

- In the last ten days, 51 previously employed people have contacted JRS Australia's employment program, Empowered To Work, informing staff that their casual employment has been officially terminated; that they have been stood down and will only be contacted when shifts become available again. The majority of clients in this group work as packers in factories, in kitchens at restaurants or cafes, in security at large sporting events which have been cancelled, or in the retail industry.
- The number of job losses in the last ten days constitutes 11% of the total number of people that the program has assisted in the last two years.
- 5 people who had been placed in future retail training, and work placements; trial cleaning roles in schools and colleges; and at social enterprises have seen these opportunities postponed indefinitely or withdrawn.
- <5 clients have had work or training placements cancelled, delaying their receipt of professional qualifications, which will allow them to find skilled work.

**Case study 1:** *Niraj\* came to Australia in 2019 and sought protection. In January 2020, Niraj found employment at a restaurant in regional NSW. He relocated to the regional area about an hour away from Sydney and found a place to live there. On 25 March 2020, he was told that the restaurant was closing down indefinitely and that he would no longer be required to work. Niraj has approximately \$40 in savings, and his fortnightly rent of approximately \$350 was due on Tuesday 31 March 2020. JRS Australia does not have money in its emergency relief (ER) budget to support him. Niraj is relying on his landlord to delay rental payments by a week so that he can borrow the required money, or find new work.*

People losing employment would generally be expected to approach Services Australia (Centrelink), find out what social security payments they are eligible for, and apply. A period on welfare may see them through to a next job.

The situation for people seeking protection is different.

### **C.) The absence of a safety net will exacerbate the effects of job losses for people seeking protection**

People seeking protection without a job or an alternative form of income have [not been entitled](#) to any form of social security under the *Social Security Act* since 1991.

Instead, they are entitled to the Status Resolution Support Service (SRSS), a discretionary government-funded program that provides a small fortnightly payment (89% of the Newstart allowance), limited case work, torture and trauma counselling to all eligible people seeking protection in Australia. Government or departmental decisions to provide or withdraw service provision under SRSS are non-reviewable at independent administrative tribunals.

Since August 2017, the Australian government has been restricting eligibility for access to SRSS. People who are no longer deemed eligible ('excluded') include those studying full time (16 hours per week or more), people on substantive visas (eg. partner or student visas) who have subsequently applied for protection, and people who have transferred more than \$1000 to or from a domestic or overseas bank account in a 12-month period.

Since April/May 2018, the government has been progressively reassessing all those on the program for 'job readiness' and expecting those deemed to be job ready to find employment within 28 days. There has been a significant reduction in the number of people on SRSS. In February 2018, there were 13,299 people on the program. In April 2019, there were 5,888 remaining on it. At least 1,000 of these people have been cut off SRSS for 'job readiness' reasons, with further cuts on this basis anticipated. A further 6,411 have lost support because their claims have been rejected twice (ie. they are 'rejected asylum seekers') or because they have obtained protection visas.

The majority of the 52,487 people arriving by plane in the last two years have not engaged the SRSS program. Those who have applied have found it much harder to obtain access.

***This history of excluding people seeking protection from an adequate financial safety net continues in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic.***

People seeking protection are ineligible for the Coronavirus supplement, as introduced in the Australian Parliament on Monday 23 March 2020. People seeking protection are also ineligible for the JobKeeper payment announced on Monday 30 March 2020.

There is currently no indication as to whether eligibility criteria for the SRSS program will be eased or whether the SRSS payment rate – currently 89% of the lowest JobSeeker payment amount – will be amended to reflect the fortnightly \$550 increase in financial support under the Coronavirus supplement.

The consequences of COVID-19 for livelihoods will worsen a situation in which the majority of people seeking protection, living and paying tax in the Australian community already do not have access to any form of safety net. Most are reliant on limited financial support for rental payments, pharmaceutical costs, food and other essential needs from charities such as JRS Australia.

JRS Australia is also struggling to cope with the dual impacts of having to scale back face-to-face services whilst simultaneously meet increases in demand.

- In the last week, there has been a 100% increase in people (100+ families and individuals) waiting for a call back/to receive an appointment from JRS Australia caseworkers.
- Food bank and emergency goods stocks, which already supported approximately 400 families and children with rice, flour, oil, dignity kits, nappies, and other essential products pre-COVID 19, are now being depleted every 72 hours.
- Emergency financial payments, which already supported more than 100 families with rent and essential medical payments pre-COVID 19, are being disbursed twice as fast.

Unless organisations such as JRS Australia continue to find adequate support to sustain these emergency services over a 6-month period, increasing numbers of people seeking asylum will become homeless.

### ***Recommendations***

**Recommendation 1:** JRS Australia calls on the Federal Government to revise eligibility criteria for access to the SRSS program to ensure that all people seeking protection in financial hardship can obtain government-funded temporary financial support, torture and trauma counselling, and casework.

**Recommendation 2:** JRS Australia calls on the Federal Government to provide SRSS financial support rate at 89% of the new JobSeeker fortnightly payment amount, whilst also providing access to an additional \$550 per fortnight in line with the Coronavirus supplement.

**Recommendation 3:** JRS Australia calls on the Federal Government and NSW Government to consider specific financial and/or in kind support to specialist agencies working with temporary visa holders, including people seeking protection, and refugees on temporary visas.

### **D. Homelessness makes self-isolation harder**

Available statistics show that homelessness has been growing in Western Sydney, and that newly arrived communities are heavily affected. In 2018, the [NSW Parliamentary Library](#) found that Auburn is the electorate with the highest percentage increase in homelessness (163%) between 2011 and 2016.

Similarly, in 2018, [Cumberland Council](#) found that the LGA had the fourth highest numbers of homeless persons in the country, that 80% of homeless live in overcrowded dwellings and that 49% had arrived in Australia in 2012 or after. According to the Department Home Affairs (DHA) [statistics](#) from December 2019, Cumberland LGA is also the council with the largest number of Bridging Visa E holders in NSW.

These statistics accord with JRS Australia's pre-COVID-19 experience working with a significant number of families and individuals seeking protection and experiencing homelessness in Western Sydney. These included a number of key sub-demographics:

- Individual women or single mothers who had experienced domestic or family violence and had chosen to leave an abusive partner despite the material and immigration uncertainty associated with this decision.
- Single men whose claims for protection had been rejected at primary and merits review stages of the refugee status determination (RSD) process, many of whom had significant mental health issues.
- Single men released from detention centres (ie. Villawood IDC) with poor mental health, alcohol or drug (AOD) abuse issues, and no forms of income or support.
- Newly arrived families or single adults with undiagnosed physical or mental health issues, no savings, and limited support or community connections.

People seeking protection are already ineligible for public or community housing in most states and territories. Access to temporary accommodation varies by provider, although demand for such accommodation far outweighs supply across the community.

***In the context of employment losses and ineligibility for safety nets, people seeking protection are at increased risk of homelessness.*** Since the introduction of Stage 1 restrictions associated with COVID-19, JRS Australia has seen a significant increase in the number of people presenting in crisis:

- Between 25 March and 27 March 2020, an additional 22 persons contacted JRS Australia's casework team citing loss of work due to COVID-19 impacts and requesting financial assistance with rental payments, bills, and food.
- In the last week, there has been a fivefold increase in the number of people in distress due to mental health concerns, imminent homelessness, or underlying risks of domestic violence in unsafe accommodation.
- JRS Australia was already supporting approximately 130 people, including single adults, couples, and families with children to stay in emergency accommodation at the cost of \$77,500 (over a six month period).

**Case study 2:** *Mazhar, Nadira, and Khubra came to Australia late last year, and then applied for protection. They contacted JRS Australia soon after in severe financial hardship. They were four weeks behind on rent and on the cusp of being homeless. After an assessment, JRS Australia began supporting the family to pay their rental arrears, but they were nonetheless evicted. Mazhar found casual work in a factory earlier this year and the family informed JRS Australia that they no longer needed any support. The family also managed to sign a short-term lease on a rental property in Western Sydney. In mid March, Mazhar lost his job and the family contacted JRS Australia again for support. All three family members were experiencing suicidal ideations and a number of mental health crisis calls were made, as well as referrals for longer-term community mental health support. The family still do not have any source of income and are getting by on food bank handouts,*

*emergency relief payments, and odd bits of money from neighbours. The family has an eviction notice for early April 2020 that has not yet been withdrawn. Because the parents have work rights, and the father cannot produce sufficient evidence of his inability to work, they are ineligible for the Status Resolution Support Service (SRSS).*

In addition to the general social, economic, and human rights implications of homelessness, JRS Australia is concerned about the increased risk of COVID-19 infection and transmission amongst homeless people seeking protection. There are serious questions about whether these groups will effectively practice physical distancing or self-isolate.

People seeking protection that are homeless, are at even higher risk of COVID-19. A significant proportion of people seeking protection suffer from pre-existing mental and physical ailments, the impacts of which are exacerbated by rough sleeping, and proximity to others who are unwell in shared accommodation. Moreover, it is well established that people who sleep rough are also more likely to experience chronic conditions such as diabetes, heart disease, and asthma, and therefore be more vulnerable to the impacts of COVID-19.

If contagious, a person living in an overcrowded rental property or a temporary homelessness shelter with shared bathrooms and cooking facilities will find it difficult to self-isolate effectively. Similarly, those who sleep rough are likely to move frequently in public areas without access to adequate hygiene and sanitation facilities.

It is also more difficult to trace or test some individuals who do not have a fixed address.

### ***Recommendations***

JRS Australia welcomes the Federal Government's \$1.1 billion dollar [support package](#) to boost mental health services, and emergency relief to vulnerable populations, including those who are homeless. JRS Australia also welcomes NSW Government's allocation of \$34 million for homelessness prevention, but supports [Homelessness NSW's call](#) for further action. In particular,

**Recommendation 4:** JRS Australia calls on relevant decision makers, industry groups, and community sector organisations to utilise vacant hotels, motels or available transitional housing services to temporarily accommodate rough sleepers, people living in overcrowded dwellings, and vulnerable people requiring self-isolation temporarily, including people seeking asylum in these circumstances.

### **E. People without Medicare or a Health Care Card may not be able to seek timely medical assistance**

People seeking protection, in particular those in the Legacy Caseload already experience significant [“mental deterioration and despair”](#) associated with the uncertainty of their situation in Australia.

The COVID-19 pandemic is contributing to heightened anxiety amongst people seeking protection living in the Australian community. JRS Australia staff report speaking to a growing number of people who are “concerned and frightened about their current situation and what is yet to come, in particular about their health and financial/housing situation.”

JRS Australia staff also report that conversations about the loss of hope, existential angst, and suicide have grown in frequency in the last two weeks. Whereas caseworkers usually have conversations about suicide two to three times each week, 90% per cent of all conversations in the last two weeks have involved discussions about hopelessness, and 80% have involved suicide ideations.



In addition, many of the families JRS Australia works with have members with serious, chronic, health issues or illnesses. These include heart disease, cancer, Hepatitis C, diabetes, kidney disease, epilepsy, auto-immune disorders, and HIV.

These individuals are already immuno-suppressed and ensuring access to medical and timely medication is vital for their survival.

Access to Medicare for people seeking protection is generally attached to the grant of a BV. In many cases, especially for those who arrived by boat, there are significant delays in the renewal of BVs, in part because the relevant Minister is required to personally 'lift a bar' or approve the grant in each individual case.

These delays can mean that people, including women and children, are unable to access critical medical care because of an expired Medicare card.

Eligibility for a Health Care Card is linked to receipt of specific Centrelink payments such as the JobSeeker payment. As such, people seeking asylum do not have access to mainstream support services for which a valid Health Care Card is a requirement. These include some Domestic Violence (DV)/Family Violence (FV) support services, some homelessness support services, and some mental health support services.

Without Health Care Cards, people seeking asylum are not entitled to the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (PBS), preventing them from consistently accessing affordable medications for mental and physical ailments outlined above.

Without proper government support, women and girls frequently assume care responsibilities for unwell family members and/or the elderly. This places women and girls at the frontline of potential cluster outbreaks in a context where there is widespread lack of Medicare coverage.

JRS Australia works with dozens of individuals who have significant health issues but no access to Medicare or the PBS. Again, leaving aside the obvious human rights implications of excluding any person living in the Australian community from accessing necessary healthcare, JRS Australia is concerned that individuals in these situations are more susceptible to a more severe manifestation of COVID-19 and less likely to seek timely, and potentially, urgent treatment for COVID-19. This is for a number of reasons:

- A person without access to Medicare or access to the PBS generally knows that they cannot afford the cost of seeing a doctor or buying medications and therefore may not do so.
- A person without a valid BV (a prerequisite for not having access to Medicare) may be reluctant to access healthcare for fear of being reported to immigration authorities.
- A person without access to Medicare may be deprioritized at a health clinic or an emergency department, especially in times of crisis.

The risks of even a small number of people with COVID-19 who do not or are not able to access timely medical care are too great.

**Case study 3:** *Rahmatullah came to Australia and sought protection in 2012. He spent three years and was released into the Australian community in 2015. Rahmatullah suffers from complex Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), bipolar disorder, kidney disease, and osteoarthritis. Rahmatullah's application for protection has been rejected at the primary stage, and at the Immigration Assessment Authority (IAA). Rahmatullah did not lodge an application for judicial review because he was hospitalized for three months at the time and unaware of his right to lodge. Rahmatullah lodged an application for Ministerial Intervention into his case in*

late 2019, and is awaiting an answer. Rahmatullah is homeless. He does not have any form of bridging visa, nor does he have Medicare. He has stopped seeing a GP because he cannot afford the fees, and does not take all of his pre-existing medication because he does not have prescriptions, nor access to the PBS in order to be able to afford all of his medicines. Rahmatullah avoids going to the hospital because he is afraid that Australian Border Force may be made aware of his presence at a health facility without a valid visa and re-detain him.

### **Recommendations:**

**Recommendation 5:** JRS Australia calls on the Federal Government to grant temporary BVs and valid Medicare cards to all people seeking protection residing in the Australian community regardless of status or position in the RSD process.

**Recommendation 6:** JRS Australia calls on the Federal Government to ensure that access to affordable medication is made available to people seeking asylum in financial hardship who are currently ineligible to the PBS.

### **F. Women are at higher risk of domestic/family violence during the COVID-19 pandemic**

Women on temporary visas already face [significant challenges](#) in reporting domestic/family violence (DV/FV), navigating the existing DV/FV prevention and response systems, and ultimately protection themselves from violence. These include:

- The ways in which sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) in countries of origin, and transit settings impact on a woman's ability to trust authorities and seek help in Australia.
- Fears that reporting domestic or family violence will be logged with DHA and impact upon the person's grant of a protection visa, their detention, or their deportation, especially in circumstances when the perpetrator is the primary protection visa applicant and uses the woman's temporary or dependent visa status as a form of coercive control.
- Fears that reporting domestic or family violence in Australia will create stigmatization from within their own communities in Australia or render them unsafe in their country of origin upon their return.
- The constant decision-making challenge of balancing the possibility of death or torture from deportation versus the ongoing lived reality of domestic violence.
- Ineligibility for essential support services such as Centrelink, Medicare, the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS), free legal advice, childcare subsidies, access to public/social housing and subsidized NAATI-accredited translating and interpreting services for supporting services.
- The lack of crisis accommodation for survivors of DV/FV and inadvertent prioritizing of citizens over women on temporary visas or seeking asylum due to a lack of brokerage funds within the Specialist Homelessness Services (SHS) funding allotments to specifically support women on temporary visas.
- The lack of knowledge amongst services, and the lack of specialist training among professionals in the SGBV sector.
- The lack of social or community support and accompanying isolation for women seek asylum victims or survivors of DV/FV that could provide forms of informal wrap-around support in crisis situations.

There are now [multiple reports highlighting](#) that the COVID-19 pandemic will contribute to a surge in domestic and family violence, and put pressure on an already under-funded response system. A Women's Safety NSW survey of 80 frontline workers, coordinators, and service providers from across the state [shows](#) that "more than 40% of respondents are already reporting an increase in client numbers since the outbreak of COVID-19." The increased risk of violence against women in the context of COVID-19 is also a concern being flagged [across the globe](#).

JRS Australia is concerned COVID-19 movement restrictions, physical distancing, and self-isolation, whilst necessary, will force women to remain in situations of escalating violence under conditions of escalating stress, and cramped living conditions.

As DV/FV services face additional demand, and face the prospect of scaling back their face-to-face services, women are less likely to be able to access casework, emergency support, or even shelters. Another particular concern is that the move to online gatherings will reduce likelihood of engagement, in particular for women with English as a second language, or those living in controlling relationships (ie. partners checking phones or changing WIFI passwords). Some women have also identified web-based information and engagement difficult to negotiate.

As outlined above, women on temporary visas, and in particular women seeking protection, face pre-existing hurdles in navigating the DV/FV landscape for a range of reasons.

**Case study 4:** *JRS Australia has been working with a young family of five for a number of years. Nazia\*, the mother has experienced serious domestic violence in the past. On the occasions she has attempted to leave, she hasn't been able to find a spot in a refuge or has reneged, worried about the consequences for her immigration status. Nazia's\* protection visa application is tied to that of her husband, who is also the perpetrator. JRS Australia has been told on multiple occasions that the family is not eligible for SRSS support because of their 'finally determined' status (that is, their application for protection has been twice rejected by the Department and the AAT). Nazia's husband has lost his job due to COVID-19, and the family is under immense financial pressure to meet their rental obligations and to buy necessities such as nappies. JRS Australia is concerned that Nazia and her children are at greater risk of DV because her husband is now home all of the time, and is increasingly anxious.*

### **Recommendations**

**Recommendation 7:** JRS Australia welcomes the Federal Government's [\\$150 million support package](#) to support people experiencing domestic, family, and sexual violence due to the impacts of COVID-19, but calls on providers to ensure that people on temporary visas are eligible to access these services.

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