

8.2 NOTICE OF MOTION - ALGA NATION GENERAL ASSEMBLY – SUBMISSION FROM MAYORAL TASKFORCE SUPPORTING PEOPLE SEEKING ASYLUM

Submitting Councillor/s:	Mayor Paul Klisaris, Deputy Mayor Brian Little and Councillor Nicky Luo
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RECOMMENDATION

That Council

- 1. Notes the efforts of the Mayoral Taskforce supporting People seeking Asylum in advocating for asylum seekers to receive better treatment from the Federal Government.**
- 2. Endorses the attached draft submission to the ALGA National General Assembly in June from Greater Dandenong City Council as Secretariat on behalf of member councils that includes Monash.**
- 3. Acknowledges that the final version of the submission to the ALGA NGA may vary in some small details from the draft attached but not in any significant manner and that any substantive change will require a renewed endorsement from Monash Council.**

INTRODUCTION

This Notice of Motion is being submitted by Councillors Nicky Luo, Paul Klisaris, and Brian Little, regarding a submission from the Mayoral Taskforce Supporting People Seeking Asylum. The submission is set to be presented as a motion at the Australian Local Government Association (ALGA) National General Assembly (NGA) in June 2025.

ISSUES AND DISCUSSION

The primary aim of this draft motion is to advocate for better treatment and support for asylum seekers by the Federal Government. The Mayoral Taskforce, with Greater Dandenong City Council acting as Secretariat, has drafted a motion highlighting the challenges faced by asylum seekers and the inadequacies of current federal support programs.

The draft motion details the significant reduction in financial assistance through the Status Resolution Support Services (SRSS) Program, the increased burden on local governments and charities, and the adverse effects of lengthy visa processing delays. The draft motion calls for a collective effort to address these issues and ensure that asylum seekers receive the necessary support and protection.

CONCLUSION

This Notice of Motion highlights the urgent need for better support and treatment of asylum seekers by the Federal Government. By endorsing the draft motion to be submitted to the ALGA National General Assembly, Monash Council can advocate for national reforms that will help local governments provide essential support to asylum seekers.

ATTACHMENT LIST

1. Officers Response to NOM [**8.2.1** - 1 page]
2. Draft Motion for submission to ALGA National General Assembly 2025 [**8.2.2** - 3 pages]

OFFICER'S REPORT

Motion to the Australian Local Government Association: Nation General Assembly – Submission From Mayoral Taskforce Supporting People Seeking Asylum

Submitting Councillor: **Mayor Paul Klisaris, Deputy Mayor Brian Little & Cr Nicky Luo**

MOTION

That Council

- 1. Notes the efforts of the Mayoral Taskforce supporting People seeking Asylum in advocating for asylum seekers to receive better treatment from the Federal Government.**
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BUDGET IMPLICATIONS

If the Notice of Motion is passed, there may be minor costs for preparing and submitting the final document. These expenses will be covered by the existing council budget.

IMPACT ON INTERNAL RESOURCES

Passing the Notice of Motion will require officer time to finalise the submission and coordinate with other councils, which will be managed within current workloads.

COUNCIL PLAN AND COUNCIL POLICIES

The Notice of Motion aligns with Monash City Council's plan and policies by advocating for social justice and supporting vulnerable community members, such as asylum seekers.

RELEVANCE TO WORK ALREADY UNDERTAKEN BY OFFICERS OR COMMITTEES

The Notice of Motion builds on the ongoing efforts of the Mayoral Taskforce and other council initiatives to support asylum seekers.

FURTHER CONSIDERATIONS

Supporting the motion will address gaps in federal support for asylum seekers, reduce the burden on local governments and charities, and ensure asylum seekers receive the necessary support. It will also strengthen Council's advocacy at the national level, promoting social justice and supporting vulnerable community members.

MONASH CITY COUNCIL

Australia Local Government Association (ALGA)

Submission from mayoral taskforce supporting people seeking asylum

2025 National General Assembly – Call for Motions:

Back Your Neighbour, Mayoral Taskforce Supporting People Seeking Asylum

MOTION SUBJECT

Supporting People Seeking Asylum within our Communities

National Objective section of online form – answering the question

‘Why is this a national issue and why should this be debated at the NGA?’ – (200-word limit)

This motion addresses the Community Services priority area for submission as it recommends reforms in national community services, which would help local governments support the Australia Government to deliver on its national objectives.

The Australian Federal Government has responsibility for immigration policy and providing people seeking protection with a clear and efficient Refugee Status Determination process, with adequate support mechanisms for those in need.

People seeking refugee protection face major barriers in accessing federal-funded support programs. Most are currently ineligible for the Status Resolution Support Services Program, the only Federal support people seeking asylum whilst their application for protection is processed.

Consequently, they rely on support from local governments, community groups for charity or work in exploitative conditions. This places huge burdens on local government and their communities, needlessly places individuals and families in destitution and erodes trust in Government process and institutions. The temporary status of people seeking asylum adds further challenges, including ineligibility to women’s refuges, homelessness services and education opportunities.

‘Arguably there is no greater obligation upon government than to maintain the trust that citizens have in meeting their community services obligations and promises, particularly to society’s most vulnerable.’ (2024 National General Assembly ALGA discussion paper).

Summary of key arguments section of online form – Background information and supporting arguments (500-word maximum limit)

The Status Resolution Support Services (SRSS) Program has become so restricted that it fails to achieve its intended purpose. Financial assistance delivered through the SRSS Program has been cut by 95% (from \$300 million in 2015-16 to \$16 million in 2023-24) and the number of people assisted has dropped to only 1,057 in 2024.

Charities cannot meet the need for material aid and financial assistance. The demand for help far outstrips what local government and charities have been able to provide. Homelessness services are reporting an increase in the number of people seeking asylum sleeping on the streets.

State governments have wound back support in expectation that the Federal Government would step in. After providing short-term assistance to fill the gap created by the Federal government's cuts, assistance for plane arrivals has ended in Queensland and the NSW Government ended its assistance in 2023.

Lengthy delays in visa processing have made the situation much worse. Currently, 2,500 people seeking asylum do not have a valid visa and work rights. The lack of assistance, coupled with extended waiting times for decisions, have led to people waiting for over 11 years without access to basic support during resolution of their asylum application.

Local Government Response

Since 2018, the Local Government Mayoral Taskforce Supporting People Seeking Asylum (Taskforce) has been advocating for the rights of people seeking asylum to the Federal Government. Established and chaired by Greater Dandenong Council, the Taskforce is made up of a growing membership of over 40 councils nationwide, who understand that this is an issue of national importance – the advocacy for a fairer and swifter Refugee Status Determination system with adequate support systems in place for individuals and families at risk of destitution.

The Albanese Government's implementation of its 2022 election promise to end temporary protection has enabled more than 20,000 refugees on temporary visas to move to permanent Resolution of Status visas, providing certainty for people who have been living and working in Australia for more than a decade.

However, there are close to 8,000 people waiting for their immigration status to be resolved. They arrived over a decade ago to seek refugee protection yet continue to live without safety and certainty. This includes families with children who are Australian citizens and will be separated from their parents due to temporary visa status.

The 'Fast Track' process, which was intended to expedite decisions, has proven to be unfair, as evidenced by the government's recent abolition of its review component. This inefficient, slow process has left 1,190 people waiting for a primary decision, with average wait times of 864

days. People who have been refused under the Fast Track process are told to engage in return processes even if country conditions have drastically changed.

The prolonged uncertainty and harsh conditions experienced during the asylum process in Australia have led to trauma and isolation and prevents families within our community from gaining the stability that refugee status provides.

NOTICE OF MOTION – (SUGGESTED 500-WORD LIMIT FOR ONLINE SUBMISSION)

This National General Assembly calls on the Australia Government to:

- 1. Acknowledge Greater Dandenong City Council as Secretariat of the Local Government Mayoral Taskforce Supporting People Seeking Asylum on behalf of the following councils that are members:**
 - a. Executive Members – Blacktown City Council, Brimbank City Council, Casey City Council, Darebin City Council, Hume City Council, Kingston City Council, Monash City Council, Merribek City Council, Wyndham City Council, Yarra City Council**
 - b. General Members – Ararat Rural City Council, City of Ballarat, Banyule City Council, Blue Mountains City Council, City of Canterbury Bankstown, Hawkesbury City Council, Hobsons Bay City Council, Inner West Council, Maribyrnong City Council, Melbourne City Council, Moonee Valley City Council, Newcastle City Council, Nillumbik Shire Council, Orange City Council, City of Port Adelaide Enfield, Randwick City Council, Surf Coast Shire, City of West Torrens, City of Whittlesea; and**
 - c. Supporter Councils – Albury City Council, City of Greater Bendigo, Cardinia Shire Council, City of Greater Geelong, City of Port Phillip, City of Hobart, Macedon Ranges Shire Council, Queenscliff Borough Council, Wellington Shire Council, City of Wagga Wagga, and**
- 2. Provide people seeking asylum with a valid visa and the opportunity to work while they await decisions on their protection application, including automating the bridging renewal process. By providing people work rights, they can contribute skills to Australia, remain independent in society and stay engaged in the asylum process.**
- 3. Expand the eligibility criteria of the Status Resolution Support Services program to ensure people’s basic needs are met, including health care, accommodation, crisis support, so people in need can live safely and not in destitution and deep poverty.**
- 4. Grant permanent visas to people who have been previously refused a visa via the unfair ‘Fast Track’ process. Ending the uncertainty, by providing a pathway to permanency to the 7,700 people, will at last resolve the matter, enabling them to rebuild their lives.**