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Lawyers hit back against moves to push asylum seekers into destitution

Australian Lawyers for Human Rights (**ALHR**) is deeply concerned by the Australian Government's ruthless decision to abolish the social safety net for thousands of people seeking asylum in Australia.

The Status Resolution Support Service (SRSS) provides a basic living allowance of around \$247 per week for people seeking protection in Australia, who would otherwise have no income. The program also provides casework support, assistance finding housing and access to counselling for survivors of torture and trauma.

Kerry Weste, President of ALHR, said, "Some people have already seen their support withdrawn and have become homeless. Many more are at risk of being cut off in coming months, including elderly people, pregnant women and families with school-age children."

"The government's plan is to take away vital support from some of the most vulnerable people in our communities. The need for a social safety net for people seeking asylum in Australia is the same as for the rest of the population: most people don't need it but it is absolutely vital for those who do."

"Many of the people affected by these changes will not be able to meet their basic everyday needs. There is no justification for anyone in our society to be forced to go without food, healthcare or a roof over their head. In fact, to do so is to deliberately violate their human rights."

"This move is completely at odds with numerous of Australia's international human rights law obligations and the pledges made by the current government in taking up a seat on the United Nations Human Rights Council."

"With community organisations already overwhelmed and struggling to cope with the increased demand, cutting people off from all income support means putting them at risk of destitution and homelessness," said Ms Weste

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ALHR was established in 1993 and is a national association of Australian solicitors, barristers, academics, judicial officers and law students who practise and promote international human rights law in Australia. ALHR has active and engaged National, State and Territory committees and specialist thematic committees. Through advocacy, media engagement, education, networking, research and training, ALHR promotes, practices and protects universally accepted standards of human rights throughout Australia and overseas.