



Refugee Communities Association of Australia Inc.
For Refugees / With Refugees / By Refugees

Media Release

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Support for Refugees, Migrants and temporary visa holders impacted by COVID-19

The Refugee Communities Association of Australia Inc (RCAA) applauds the Morrison Government's leadership in managing the COVID-19 pandemic crisis in Australia.

The RCAA is led by refugee communities and their representative groups in every state and territory, as a unified peak national body that advocates for people of refugee background, with lived experience in Australia. The RCAA has been working with refugee communities and other vulnerable groups, including asylum seekers and international students affected by the COVID-19 pandemic.

RCAA would like to urge the Commonwealth Government to extend support for temporary visa holders who have been financially affected by losing their work as a result of COVID-19. The RCAA supports the Federation of Ethnic Communities Council of Australia's (FECCA) statement, "Temporary visa holders must not be left behind."

Juma Piri Piri, RCAA Chairperson, fears that failure to extend these payments to students and others living in Australia on temporary visas will create another humanitarian crisis. Mr Piri Piri called on the Government to extend the Jobkeeper and Jobseeker payments to temporary visa holders and to establish a dedicated hardship fund for international students who are unable to return to their home countries.

Elijah Buol OAM, RCAA Deputy Chairperson and 2019 Qld Local Hero said, "he is very pleased that the Morrison Government has shown active and strong leadership in dealing with the current crisis. It is, therefore, very important to extend this same admirable act of leadership to those who need our support the most in our community, regardless of their visa or residency status,"

Mr Piri Piri said, "Excluding students and other temporary visa holders from the Jobseeker and Jobkeeper payments denies a safety net to people who have no income and no way to return to their home countries. This can only end in tragedy. One international student is already known to have taken his own life. The COVID-19 crisis also creates a future economic risk for Australia, as major Australian industries, including education, agriculture, and hospitality rely on temporary migrants' workers.

"Further, Australia risks its reputation as a preferred destination for people from around the world for work and study and there will be a long-term impact to international education sector, valued at over \$35 billion, said Mr Piri.

For more information, please contact the RCAA General Secretary, Parsu Sharma Luitl JP on 0412 265 317 or by email: admin@rcaoa.org.au