

**MEDIA STATEMENT**

**TUESDAY 27<sup>TH</sup> APRIL 2021**

Liberty Victoria's Rights Advocacy Project is calling for a fairer and more transparent bridging visa system for refugees and people seeking asylum who are waiting in the community for their protection claims to be processed, as part of its latest report '[Bridging the Department's Visa Blindspot](#)'.

The report, being launched at an event tonight, found that denying access to bridging visas with work and study rights to people seeking asylum and refugees significantly impacted people's mental and physical health and placed enormous strain on the community organisations that end up supporting them. Co-author of the report, Isabella Farrell-Hallegraeff said,

***"Especially when you place this into the current context of COVID-19, having refugees living as unlawful citizens is a public health concern. Without a bridging visa many people seeking asylum are weathering this crisis without the stability of affordable home, material aid and accessible medical care."***

***"There has also been confusion about the eligibility of people in this situation to access testing and vaccination, even though both are meant to be free and available for everyone."***

Through Freedom of Information requests, the authors of the report discovered that the Department of Home Affairs did not know how many people were being left to languish in the community without an income as a result of the Morrison Government's decision to deny them access to a bridging visa.

The report, which can be found [here](#), is being launched tonight within an online event and panel discussion on bridging visas, including:

- Former public servant and refugee assessment officer in the Department of Home Affairs, **Shaun Hanns**;
- Experienced migration lawyer, **Greg Hanson**;
- Long-term advocate and co-founder of the Brigidine Asylum Seeker Project, **Sister Brigid Arthur**;
- **Don Khan**, a 24-year-old Rohingya refugee from Myanmar who is being detained in the Parkville Detention Hotel; and
- **Ishmael Hussein** also from the Parkville Detention Hotel, who is a Somalian refugee.

Join the event online tonight from 6:00 - 7.30pm (AEST) over Zoom to celebrate the official release of their report. For further information and to secure your ticket, please visit the [Eventbrite page](#)

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