



**LEETON**  
SHIRE COUNCIL

**ORDINARY COUNCIL MEETING  
SUPPLEMENTARY AGENDA**

**28 NOVEMBER 2018  
7.00PM**

TO BE HELD IN THE  
COUNCIL CHAMBERS  
23-25 CHELMSFORD PLACE  
LEETON NSW 2705

Authorised for release: Jackie Kruger General Manager

**LEETON SHIRE COUNCIL**

**AGENDA**

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**6. MAYORAL MINUTES**

- 6.2 LOCAL GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO THE CHANGES TO THE  
FEDERAL STATUS RESOLUTION SERVICES (SRSS) PROGRAM.....2**

## MAYORAL REPORTS

### **ITEM 6.2 LOCAL GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO THE CHANGES TO THE FEDERAL STATUS RESOLUTION SERVICES (SRSS) PROGRAM**

**RELATED FILE NUMBER** EF10/130

**RECORD NUMBER** 18/470

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## SUMMARY/PURPOSE

The purpose of this Mayoral Minute is to seek Leeton Shire Council's support of the Local Government Mayoral Taskforce Supporting People Seeking Asylum. This Taskforce has been formed in response to the Federal Government initiative to withdraw all income support for hundreds of people seeking asylum who are living in the community still waiting to have their claims for refugee status assessed.

Individuals, including local people, have already experienced having their benefits cut, causing great financial and psychological distress. The Federal Government plan is to cut support for thousands more, including families.

This Local Government Mayoral Taskforce has been established in Victoria and is inviting support from councils nationwide. They are working with peak bodies like the Refugee Council of Australia, Asylum Seeker Refugee Centre, Australian Refugee Action Network and Rural Australians for Refugees to maintain advocacy on this issue.

As a Refugee Welcome Zone, Leeton Shire Council has made a commitment to welcoming refugees into the community, upholding the human rights of refugees, and demonstrating compassion for refugees. In Leeton Shire we also know how much refugees contribute meaningfully to our workforce needs. This is an opportunity to join with other local Councils to advocate for the reversal of these cuts, and the reinstatement of income support, for the benefit of people in the Leeton, and wider, community.

There is no direct cost to participating in the SRSS Program.

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## RECOMMENDATION

THAT Council:

1. Indicates support for the Local Government Mayoral Taskforce Supporting People Seeking Asylum.
  2. Becomes a member of the Taskforce.
  3. Undertakes advocacy with State and Federal MPs, including the Federal Minister for Home Affairs and the Prime Minister.
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**ATTACHMENTS**

- 1 [↓](#) Request to LGAs - SRSS from ARAN



1 November 2018

Dear Mayor and Councillors

**Changes to the SRSS program are causing destitution in Australian communities – call for support**

You may have heard that the Federal Government has recently withdrawn **all income support** for hundreds of people seeking asylum who are **living in the community** still waiting to have their claims for refugee status assessed – **and the plan is to cut support for thousands more, including families.**

The Status Resolution Support Service payment (SRSS) is less than \$35 a day (less than Newstart) and was designed to support people as they go through the prolonged process of seeking asylum. Most of that goes in rent so these changes will potentially leave those affected homeless. The total withdrawal of this minimal income support **will leave people destitute, entirely reliant on charity to meeting housing costs and living expenses.** It may also leave them without support services like trauma counselling.

**Around 13,000 people living across Australia receive SRSS**, including single people, the elderly, and families (including up to 4,000 children) enabling them to meet basic needs of food, rent and medical treatment.

Peak bodies, church and welfare organisations, together with grassroots advocacy groups have been actively lobbying to have these cuts reversed. Thanks to coordinated lobbying, plans to cut this support for families have been delayed, though only until early next year. Individuals on the other hand **have already been having their benefits cut** so the situation is **desperate and urgent.** For further details about the cuts see the Refugee Council of Australia Factsheet and Australian Churches Refugee Taskforce background on SRSS cuts referenced below.

**What you can do - join other LGAs who support the restoration of SRSS**

We are writing to ask you to **join with other local Councils to advocate for the reversal of these harsh cuts**, and the reinstatement of this income support. It is a local issue affecting the welfare of people in local communities so it is vital that local Councils raise their voice.

A growing number of Councils led by the City of Greater Dandenong have formed a taskforce against the cuts. See below a list of Councils already supporting this initiative.

The Local Government Mayoral Taskforce Supporting People Seeking Asylum has been established in Victoria and is inviting support from councils nationwide. They are working with peak bodies like the Refugee Council of Australia, Asylum Seeker Refugee Centre, Australian Refugee Action Network and Rural Australians for Refugees to maintain advocacy on this issue.

For further information about the Joint Council Taskforce and SRSS advocacy efforts, contact Cr Matthew Kirwan, City of Greater Dandenong

**Could you please reply to this letter** indicating whether your Council is prepared to join with other Councils advocate against these cuts devastating Australian communities by emailing [austrefugeenetwork@gmail.com](mailto:austrefugeenetwork@gmail.com) and please copy in Cr Matthew Kirwan [matthew.kirwan@cgd.vic.gov.au](mailto:matthew.kirwan@cgd.vic.gov.au).

Yours faithfully

Marie Hapke  
for the **Australian Refugee Action Network**  
[www.australianrefugeeactionnetwork.wordpress.com](http://www.australianrefugeeactionnetwork.wordpress.com)

Further information:

1. Local Government Mayoral Taskforce Supporting People Seeking Asylum  
<http://www.greaterdandenong.com/document/32480/local-government-mayoral-taskforce-supporting-people-seeking-asylum>
2. Refugee Council of Australia Factsheet  
<https://www.refugeecouncil.org.au/getfacts/seekingsafety/asylum/srss-cuts-factsheet/>
3. Australian Churches Refugee Taskforce background on SRSS cuts  
<http://www.acrt.com.au/dignity-not-destitution-changes-to-support-services-for-people-seeking-asylum-srss/>
4. City of Greater Dandenong response  
<http://www.greaterdandenong.com/document/32379/greater-dandenong-council-advocacy-and-practical-response-to-the-changes-to-the-federal-status-resolution-services-srss-program>
5. Council Minutes 23 April 2018 – Greater Dandenong Advocacy Notice of Motion  
<http://www.greaterdandenong.com/document/32164/council-minutes-23-april-2018>
6. Joint Statement by Victorian Councils against changes to the Status Resolution Support Services (SRSS)  
<http://www.greaterdandenong.com/document/32470/draft-joint-statement-against-changes-to-the-srss>
7. Victorian councillors condemn federal cuts to asylum seeker payments  
<https://sable.madmimi.com/c/130362?id=3737.698.1.cc8f0449e75c3a6c3a03da5c217f1f4d>

**Taskforce member Councils (October 2018)**

- Brimbank City Council
- City of Darebin
- City of Greater Dandenong
- City of Monash
- Moreland City Council
- Yarra City Council

**Councils involved as General Members**

General Members get consulted on Taskforce direction, take an active role in Taskforce activities and contribute resources to the Taskforce.

- Banyule City Council
- Cardinia Shire Council
- City of Ballarat
- City of Port Phillip
- City of Whittlesea
- Maribynong City Council
- Moonee Valley City Council
- Wyndham City Council