

# Support for newly arrived Palestinians

Guide for Victorian Government departments,  
service providers and agencies

April 2024

## Purpose

This guide was prepared by the Department of Premier and Cabinet Multicultural Affairs portfolio and summarises the supports available to newly arrived Palestinians fleeing the Israel-Gaza conflict and arriving in Victoria.

## Context

### Israel-Gaza conflict

Since the start of the current Israel-Gaza conflict in October 2023, the Commonwealth Government has issued over 2,200 visas to Palestinians. Although the exact number of Palestinian arrivals in Victoria is not known, it is estimated that there are approximately 150 people in Victoria who have fled Gaza. Most of those who have arrived are understood to be on visitor (subclass 600) visas.

### Victoria's Palestinian communities

Victoria's Palestinian diaspora communities are small, with approximately 4,000 Palestinian-born individuals residing in Victoria. Many of the individuals and families arriving from Gaza have expressed the need for greater connection to communities, services and referral pathways.

### Visa categories and entitlements

The supports and services available to those fleeing the conflict will vary depending on visa type. The two key visa types that this cohort is on are summarised below.

#### Visitor (subclass 600) visa

Palestinian arrivals who hold a visitor (subclass 600) visa are not eligible for Medicare, income support or work rights. In addition, this visa subclass does not grant access to Humanitarian Settlement Program (HSP) supports.

#### Bridging (subclass 050) visa E

In February 2024, the [Commonwealth announced a new visa pathway](#) – bridging (subclass 050) visa E for those on visitor visas from Gaza. This visa grants access to Medicare, work and study rights, noting students still remain fee-liable under this visa type, and this visa subclass does not grant access to HSP supports.

## Service guide

### Visa support and family reunification

The Commonwealth Government has responsibility for all visa-related issues, including processing applications. **Information regarding visa options, conditions and application requirements** is available at <https://immi.homeaffairs.gov.au/>.

If individuals have **visa enquiries about family or loved ones in Israel or Gaza**, queries can be directed to the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade on +61 2 6261 3305 (from overseas) or 1300 555 135 (toll free from within Australia).

Advice on the specific visa support available to individuals fleeing the Israel-Gaza conflict can be found at <https://www.homeaffairs.gov.au/help-and-support/hamas-israel-conflict>.

### Legal support for visa applications

New arrivals may be seeking legal advice or support to apply for family reunification or other visas for family members who remain offshore. Some arrivals may also be seeking assistance in respect to their own visa status, with many holding temporary visas.

Accessing legal support and advice is critical in the submission of visa applications and it is important that individuals are referred to appropriately qualified legal services. Information on available supports can be found at the following resources:

- The Commonwealth Department of Home Affairs provides **advice to individuals who wish to extend their stay in Australia**, including [visa options](#) and information regarding [bridging visa E \(subclass 050\)](#) - <https://immi.homeaffairs.gov.au/visas/getting-a-visa/visa-listing/bridging-visa-e-050-051/subclass-050>.
- [Refugee Legal](#) has a **dedicated hotline** for individuals impacted by the conflict (Israel-Gaza Legal Hotline – 03 9413 0107), and an information sheet outlining key information on free legal help that is available in English, Arabic and Hebrew ([Israel-Gaza Crisis Information Sheet](#)).
- a migration agent or lawyer registered with the Office of Migration Agents Registration Authority, further information is available at: [www.mara.gov.au](http://www.mara.gov.au).
- The [Asylum Seeker Resource Centre's](#) (ASRC) [Human Rights Law Program \(HRLP\)](#) provides **free legal advice and services to refugees and people seeking asylum**. This includes limited legal assistance, advice, information or representation ( <https://asrc.org.au/get-help/legal-help/>). The program also offers free weekly legal clinics and regular information sessions and workshops for refugees and individuals seeking asylum. In addition, individuals can access a range of infosheets with general legal and migration information, including a fact sheet on visa advice and assistance for Palestinians ([https://asrc.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2023/12/19\\_12Fact-Sheet-Visa-advice-and-assistance-for-Palestinians.pdf](https://asrc.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2023/12/19_12Fact-Sheet-Visa-advice-and-assistance-for-Palestinians.pdf)). For further information regarding HRLP, contact ASRC's legal team at [legal@asrc.org.au](mailto:legal@asrc.org.au) or via phone on 03 9274 9889.

## Health

The Victorian Government is providing free public health care, including mental health support, for people fleeing the Israel-Gaza conflict. This includes support for those arriving on a visitor visa, who are ineligible for Medicare and do not otherwise receive government-subsidised health services.

Further information is available on the Department of Health's [website](#) on refugee and asylum seeker health and wellbeing, including support for people fleeing the conflict.

As part of this support, newly arrived Palestinians will receive access to care in Victorian hospitals as admitted, non-admitted and emergency patients. This includes fee waivers for the following services:

- **Ambulance services** (<https://www.health.vic.gov.au/patient-care/ambulance-payment-responsibilities-authorisations-and-concessions>)
- **Community health services** (<https://www.health.vic.gov.au/community-health/community-health-program-access-policy>)
- **Dental services** (<https://www.health.vic.gov.au/dental-health/access-to-victorias-public-dental-care-services>)
- **Catch up immunisation for children and adults** (<https://www.health.vic.gov.au/immunisation/vaccination-for-special-risk-groups>).

Individuals fleeing the conflict will also have access to a number of other Victorian health services, including specialised refugee and asylum seeker support. Available services include:

- **Victorian Virtual Emergency Department** (<https://www.vved.org.au/patients/>)
- **Priority Primary Care Centres** (<https://www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au/priority-primary-care-centres-ppccs#bhc-content>)
- **Supercare Pharmacies** (<https://www.health.vic.gov.au/primary-care/victorian-supercare-pharmacies>)
- **Maternal and Child Health Services** (<https://www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au/health/healthyliving/maternal-and-child-health-services>)
- **Early Parenting Schemes** (<https://www.health.vic.gov.au/maternal-child-health/early-parenting-centres>)
- **Mental health and wellbeing support**, including through [Mental Health & Wellbeing Hubs alongside Partners in Wellbeing](#) and [Mental Health & Wellbeing Locals](#) ('Local Services')

Additional guidance regarding health services for people fleeing the Israel-Gaza conflict is available at [https://www.health.vic.gov.au/sites/default/files/2023-12/free-public-health-care-in-victoria-for-people-fleeing-the-israel-palestine-conflict-interim\\_0.docx](https://www.health.vic.gov.au/sites/default/files/2023-12/free-public-health-care-in-victoria-for-people-fleeing-the-israel-palestine-conflict-interim_0.docx).

## Mental health and wellbeing

A number of government and non-government services provide access to free mental health and wellbeing support to individuals regardless of Medicare status:

- [Mental Health & Wellbeing Hubs alongside Partners in Wellbeing](#) are providing people in Victoria, of any age with support for a range of issues.
- [Mental Health & Wellbeing Locals](#) are available to anyone aged 26 years and over experiencing mental health or wellbeing concerns.
- In partnership with the Department of Education, [Foundation House](#) is providing tailored trauma-informed support to school communities, including resource sharing.

## Maternal and child health

- Families can access **free maternal and child health services** regardless of visa status.
- New arrivals enrolled in the Victorian MCH service by the City of Melbourne will have access to physical and developmental checks, referrals, and childhood immunisations. Children and families residing in Melbourne's outer suburbs are eligible to receive MCH services.

## Housing

### Housing Establishment Fund (HEF)

HEF support is available to Transitional Housing Management and Homelessness Support program agencies to assist eligible clients to access overnight accommodation or private rental accommodation. HEF aims to provide support to people experiencing homelessness or housing crisis.

Asylum seekers may be eligible for HEF support, and further information is available at <https://providers.dffh.vic.gov.au/housing-establishment-fund>.

### Private Rental Assistance Program (PRAP)

The Victorian Government's Private Rental Assistance Program (PRAP) is intended to prevent or end homelessness and housing crises through rapidly rehousing people, supporting at-risk households to sustain affordable and appropriate housing in the rental market, and assisting people who currently live in crisis, transitional or social housing to become independent in the private rental market.

A person's visa status does not preclude them from receiving PRAP, provided they are assessed as eligible by a community provider. Further information is available at <https://fac.dffh.vic.gov.au/sites/default/files/2019-11/PRAP%20Guidelines%20revised%202019.pdf>.

### Community housing support

A number of community-based organisations are supporting housing and accommodation arrangements for newly arrived Palestinians, including **Palestinian Christians**, who have provided housing support for 11 families since January 2024.

Further information on accommodation services through Palestinian Christians is available at <https://palestinianchristians.org.au/community-services/>.

## Material aid

On 2 April 2024, the Commonwealth Government announced [\\$2 million in emergency financial assistance](#) for people who have fled the conflict, arrived in Australia on temporary visas and who are experiencing financial hardship. This support is specifically for cohorts who do not have access to Commonwealth income support.

The Australian Red Cross (ARC) is administering this funding on behalf of the Commonwealth in the form of small cash payments/vouchers to meet basic needs, including food, medicine, and shelter. Further information, including how to apply for emergency financial assistance, is available at [Emergency relief support for temporary visa holders | Australian Red Cross](#).

Additionally, the ASRC provides a drop-in service for people seeking asylum which provides access to information and services relating to material aid. Further information is available at <https://asrc.org.au/our-work/support-services/>.

## Support for families and young people

### Place-based support for families and young people

The Victorian Government supports Community hubs as gateways to services for refugees and asylum seekers and to connect families with each other, with their school, and with existing services. For more information see [www.communityhubsaustralia.org.au](http://www.communityhubsaustralia.org.au).

The Centre for Multicultural Youth has also developed a range of resources and information for young people and their families about school education in Victoria. For more information see: [www.cmy.net.au/young-people-community/education/](http://www.cmy.net.au/young-people-community/education/).

### Unaccompanied minors

Unaccompanied minors and their carers may also make up the Victorian Palestinian community and are supported through Victoria's Refugee Minor Program. Referrals can only be made by the Commonwealth Department of Home Affairs.

Further information is at: [services.dffh.vic.gov.au/refugee-minor-program](http://services.dffh.vic.gov.au/refugee-minor-program)

## Education

Individuals that hold a visitor visa may be ineligible for some education supports. This includes access to free technical and further education (TAFE), and fee exemption for primary and secondary school education. Some new arrivals have access to other tailored education supports.

### Early childhood education

**Children aged three and four are eligible to access [free kindergarten in Victoria](#).** Families do not need to have a Health Care Card, Australian citizenship or proof of address to be eligible to access the Free Kinder program. This includes access to standalone (sessional) kindergartens and long day care (childcare) centres. Families can enrol their children in kindergarten by contacting an early childhood education and care service or their local council (<https://www.vic.gov.au/how-enrol-kindergarten>). For further information on eligibility requirements and funding access, visit <https://www.vic.gov.au/sending-child-kinder> or contact [early.years.participation@education.vic.gov.au](mailto:early.years.participation@education.vic.gov.au).

Children on a humanitarian visa may be eligible for the **Access to Early Learning (AEL) program**. The AEL program provides targeted early intervention support for children from families with complex needs. Individuals can contact their local site for further information regarding eligibility requirements or visit <https://www.vic.gov.au/access-early-learning>.

### Primary and secondary school education

Primary and secondary-aged children who have arrived to Victoria on visitor visas can apply to access temporary education (up to 12 weeks of schooling). It is important to note that this education pathway attracts both tuition and non-tuition fees. Further information regard the application process and fees is available at <https://www.study.vic.gov.au/en/how-to-apply/Pages/default.aspx>.

### Vocational education

**The Asylum Seeker Vocational Education and Training (ASVET) program** provides eligible asylum seekers exemption from the citizenship and residency criteria typically required for Victorian

Government subsidised Skills-First training. The program was recently expanded to increase the range of training providers, eligibility requirements, and available subsidised accredited courses.

Under ASVET, individuals seeking asylum can enrol at technical and further education (TAFE) and courses provided through Learn Local providers. Anyone who has applied for a humanitarian, protection or refugee visa and hold a bridging visa for this purpose are also eligible for the program.

Further information regarding program eligibility is available at <https://www.vic.gov.au/asylum-seeker-vet-program> and [https://content.vic.gov.au/sites/default/files/2023-08/asvet-program-guidelines\\_0.pdf](https://content.vic.gov.au/sites/default/files/2023-08/asvet-program-guidelines_0.pdf).

## Employment and Training

Employment and training supports are available to newly arrived migrants, noting that an individual's work rights are dependent on their visa type. Individuals on visitor visas do not hold working rights. A summary of supports for individuals whose visa types do grant work rights, is provided below.

- **Jobs Victoria** provide a range of [employment services](#) to newly arrived migrants, people seeking asylum and refugees. This includes training, education and learning opportunities to support jobseekers to become work-ready and secure employment. Individuals can also access employment support through Jobs Victoria's Work and Learning Centres, located in Fitzroy, North Geelong, Morwell, Ballarat and Shepparton (<https://jobs.vic.gov.au/help-for-jobseekers/personalised-support/work-and-learning-centres>).
- **The Reconnect Program** is delivered statewide and supports individuals experiencing disadvantage to overcome barriers to education, training and employment. Individuals who hold, or have applied for, a humanitarian, protection or refugee visa are eligible for the program. Further information can be found at <https://www.vic.gov.au/reconnect-program>.
- The Victorian Government's **Skills and Jobs Centres** provides free career, employment and training services to all Victorians, regardless of visa status. The program offers a range of services, including career counselling, apprenticeship and training pathways, study advice, and job matching to local employment opportunities. Information on the services and support offered through the program is available at <https://www.vic.gov.au/skills-and-jobs-centres>.

## Public transport

Healthcare card holders are entitled to travel concessions in Victoria and can purchase a concession myki and access concession fares.

Individuals seeking asylum are eligible for a Public Transport Victoria (PTV) Asylum Seeker ID and a Concession Myki. This provides recipients a 50 per cent discount on public transportation. Information regarding eligibility requirements and Asylum Seeker ID application is available at <https://www.ptv.vic.gov.au/tickets/myki/concessions-and-free-travel/asylum-seekers/>.

Not-for-profit and charitable organisations can apply to PTV to purchase 1, 7 or 30 day travel passes at discounted rates to issue to newly arrived individuals. Further information on how to apply is available at <https://www.ptv.vic.gov.au/tickets/myki/concessions-and-free-travel/travel-pass/>.