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Federal Government’s decision to strip income support is shameful: Jesuit Social Services

The Federal Government’s decision to strip income support and housing from a group of highly vulnerable families seeking asylum in Australia will impact the entire community, says Jesuit Social Services.

“We are appalled that the Federal Government is continuing its cruel campaign of needlessly punishing people who have sought asylum in Australia,” says Jesuit Social Services CEO Julie Edwards.

“These highly vulnerable families were evacuated from Nauru and brought to Australia for medical treatment to address significant and complex health needs.

“It is deeply concerning that our Government is seeking to force these people, who have already experienced so much hardship, into destitution by removing the small amount of income and accommodation support they have been receiving,” says Ms Edwards.

The Federal Government’s decision means that up to 100 people, who have previously spent time on Nauru, will be transferred to six-month bridging visas and stripped of the income support they have been receiving.

Ms Edwards says that the bridging visas come with Australian work rights, however the families impacted by the decision have little prospects of securing employment.

“We are talking about people who have faced significant challenges in their journeys to Australia, including time in offshore detention, and who are dealing with health issues serious enough to have been evacuated from Nauru.

These people are among the most vulnerable members of our community and have slim prospects of finding work or being able to support themselves and their families.”

Ms Edwards says that the Government’s decision will further stretch the limited resources of Australian charities.

“There are many wonderful organisations and services in the Australian community that provide valuable support to people seeking asylum who will step up once again and show the type of compassion and leadership that is lacking from our Government.

“We call on our political leaders to permanently resolve the status of all asylum seekers in Australia’s care, both in regional processing offshore and in the community, to ensure these vulnerable people are not caught up in such a dangerous and inhumane situation.

“We cannot allow more people to fall into destitution – it’s time to support these families and ensure all people seeking asylum in Australia are given a fair go.”

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