

# Bridging Visa E (BVE)

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## AUSTRALIAN DEMOCRATS ACTION PLAN BRIDGING VISA E (BVE) IMMIGRATION AND MULTICULTURAL AFFAIRS

The majority of asylum seekers are not detained, but instead live in the community on Bridging Visas. They include asylum seekers whose health has deteriorated from prolonged detention and cannot be cared for in detention any longer, as well as people who arrived with a visa and then applied for asylum after arriving. There were over a thousand people from East Timor in this situation for many years.

There are approximately 7021<sup>1</sup> asylum seekers living lawfully in the community on bridging visas.

Some are entitled to work and Medicare (if they lodge within 45 days and have not appealed beyond the Refugee Review Tribunal). Some receive a federally funded Asylum Seeker Assistance Scheme payment through the Red Cross (if they have not had a first decision within 6 months and have not been rejected by the Refugee Review Tribunal).

However many have no right to work, Medicare or any welfare payment. This includes all asylum seekers awaiting a humanitarian decision from the Immigration Minister and all asylum seekers released from detention on a Bridging Visa E, including those released for psychological or medical grounds.

Some asylum seekers have relatives or friends to support them, but a significant number have no support at all. They cannot access any government funded welfare agency, such as Centrelink, or a Migrant Resource Centre. They rely on the good will of churches and the community for their housing, food and medical costs.

People on this visa face conditions that force them into the private charity system, reliant on NGOs or ad-hoc community groups for basic needs such as food and shelter.

This cost of supporting these people is already being paid by the welfare sector and community groups. The Asylum Seeker Assistance Scheme should be extended to all people on BVEs.

The Australian Democrats believe that no person in the Australian community should be left without support for their basic needs. We opposed the introduction of the 45 day rule in the Senate and believe this rule should be abolished. Anyone who makes a legitimate claim for protection from persecution should be entitled to be assisted while they have that claim assessed.

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**Senator Andrew Bartlett**  
Spokesperson on  
Immigration

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<sup>1</sup> Senate Estimates QON November 2006.