

Hello. My name is [insert name], and I am the campaign manager of “ImmiGreat”, a campaign that aims to improve the health status and quality of life for refugees and immigrants in Australia.

If you looked at me and I asked how you thought I came to Australia, what would you start imagining? I’d imagine some of you might picture me fleeing from a third-world country with poor hygiene and bat soup, coming to shore by boat.

When I first came to Australia, I came across many obstacles, especially with my mental health and my finances. I was in immigration detention for 6 months, and although some of you might think that that’s a long time, the truth is that many people aren’t as lucky as me. I was fortunate enough to be able to work my way up to where I am now, but many refugees and asylum seekers aren’t as privileged.

According to data from the BNLA survey of humanitarian migrants and the HILDA survey representative of the whole Australian population, humanitarian entrants have been found to be more likely to have higher levels of psychological distress compared to the general population. Also, for asylum seekers who have been held in detention, there is growing evidence of the harmful effects of detention on mental health.

Numerous other studies demonstrate the needs of refugees and asylum seekers in Australia that aren’t being met, too many to fit into the time that I have.

Despite these clear health inequities, according to the Federal Budget Summary by the Refugee Council of Australia, the Government is planning to reduce funding for people seeking asylum who are assisted financially under the SRSS. The payments have been reduced from \$140 million to \$93 million to \$40 million in the past 3 consecutive years, and has cut its spending in half again to \$20 million in 2020-2021 (n.a., The Federal Budget: What it means for refugees and people seeking humanitarian protection, 2021).

The SRSS program provides a vital lifeline for people awaiting an outcome on their asylum application, and cuts will force people further into destitution (n.a., The Federal Budget: What it means for refugees and people seeking humanitarian protection, 2020).

Furthermore, the Government plans to drastically reduce its budget allocation to its offshore processing arrangements from \$308 million to \$302 million to \$296 million in the next 3 years respectively, all of which are lower than the spending in previous years (n.a., Migrant Data Matrices, 2020).

Additionally, there is no law governing the way people should be treated in immigration detention (n.a., Asylum seekers and refugees, n.d.).

A reduction in spending towards financial support and immigration services and a lack of laws governing treatment towards people in immigration detention are all likely to contribute towards the health issues of refugees and immigrants in Australia.

ImmiGreat aims to improve the health of this population by improving the aforementioned factors.

The overarching goals of ImmiGreat are to (1) keep government spending on offshore processing arrangements at \$1 billion or more in the years 2022 to 2025, (2) keep government spending on financial support for people seeking asylum at \$50 million or more in the years 2022 to 2025 and (3) implement health and welfare regulations indicating how people should be treated in immigration detention such as adequate food, clean drinking water and shelter.

These goals will work to improve the health and quality of life for refugees and immigrants in Australia.

If you ever wanted to support the refugees and asylum seekers in Australia, I am showing you a way, and that is through ImmiGreat. Thank you for listening to my Ted Talk.

<https://www.mhc.wa.gov.au/media/3411/201016-mhc20-31952-mental-health-cald-literature-review-attachment-3.pdf>

<https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/people/people-and-communities/migrant-data-matrices/latest-release>

<https://www.refugeecouncil.org.au/federal-budget-summary/>

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