



STRENGTH AND KINDNESS

Brigidine Asylum Seekers Project (BASP)

I was a stranger and you made me welcome ...

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PROVIDING ACCOMMODATION ASSISTANCE TO ASYLUM SEEKERS

Which asylum seekers need accommodation support?

Asylum seekers in the following circumstances often need our help in securing suitable and affordable accommodation:

- Individuals or families who are seeking asylum are awaiting the outcome of their claim for financial support from the government
- Individuals or families *may* receive limited funding through the Department of Immigration and Border Protection (DIBP). Even if they do receive support, this will be limited to 89% of the Newstart allowance, an amount insufficient for a person's or a family's accommodation and living needs, without private means or outside help.
- Individuals or families with work rights but who are unable to secure the hours of work needed to meet living and accommodation costs in the private rental market.
- Individuals or families whose income has ceased, eg because of government refusal to recognise their claims as refugees. In these cases, any work rights and financial support are usually withdrawn.

Without our assistance some asylum seekers are not able to meet living and accommodation costs in the private rental market.

Options for providing accommodation

Depending upon the resources available to each parish, accommodation offered may be for short or longer terms, or for a defined period. The options for provision of support can include

- Making an existing residence available for use by people seeking asylum
- Sponsoring an individual or family in private rental, in full or part
- Offering room(s) or a bungalow in private home

Matching needs with offers

If your parish is able to provide assistance, BASP will meet with the parish team offering accommodation assistance. We will clarify with you the terms of the offer, including the timeframe, who will bear what costs, expectations and restrictions on use of the dwelling, and any other issues.

BASP will then identify potential asylum seeker candidate(s) who may match the offer, and will arrange a meeting between the asylum seekers, parish representatives and any other people who may be appropriate, eg the case worker from the relevant immigration agency. The meeting will normally occur



where the accommodation will be offered. The meeting will introduce the parties, inspect the accommodation, confirm the conditions and expectations regarding use, including who will be doing what, and communication arrangements. Following this meeting, there is a cooling off period for all parties to consider whether to proceed.

If it is decided to proceed, BASP will work with the parish to assist with setting up, and providing material and financial aid for basics if needed, pending income support commencing.

Summary of Issues to consider in providing ongoing support

The main issues to consider include

- The need to identify the main point of contact for the family and for the parish – this will normally be the case worker or BASP, depending upon the relationship the parish will have with the family
- If BASP is the main point of contact, BASPs representative will be available for discussion and resolution of issues
- BASP will assist with alternative arrangements if the accommodation arrangement falls through, and will work to achieve an acceptable outcome with all parties
- Other issues, mentioned above, include length of commitment, the extent of contribution to costs, expectations by the donor of the individual or family eg for upkeep of premises, involvement with donors, acceptable and non-acceptable performance
- Understanding the balance between providing support to asylum seekers and sensitivity to the need for the family's independence and freedom of choice. It is an extremely important issue for parishes to ensure that appropriate arrangements are in place to protect the privacy and freedom of choice of the asylum seeker family.

For any parish- or individual or family- interested to discuss accommodation assistance, please call BASP on 03 96962107