



***COVID-19 Continues to Impact Us All:
Impacts and barriers for people on temporary and
without visas in Australia***

RESEARCH FINDINGS

(Report forthcoming)

March 2021

Global Report – Local Context



Australian Red Cross COVID-19 Emergency Relief reached:

- People across **99% of Australia**
- Over **125,000 people** on temporary or without visa with emergency relief payments
- Over **25,000 people** through food parcels
- Over **500,000 people** with information and referrals for additional support

We also supported people in significantly vulnerable situations with casework support across the country.

Australian Red Cross data supports global report

Australian data for the Global Migration Lab report: **Locked down and left out?** Is based on a comprehensive online survey, semi structured interviews and focus group discussions with people who benefitted from Red Cross COVID-19 Emergency Relief support, external stakeholders and Red Cross teams.

The data reveals that **COVID-19 Continues to Impact Us All** and people on temporary and without visa in Australia experienced significant impacts and barriers to support during the pandemic. See [here](#) for an earlier report by Australian Red Cross on the situation of temporary visa holders during the first four months of the pandemic.



Locked down and left out?

Why access to basic services for migrants is critical to our COVID-19 response and recovery

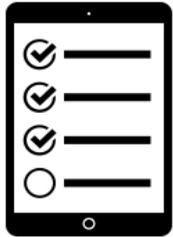
A report by the Red Cross Red Crescent Global Migration Lab



Research Methodology



- **Mixed methods** for representative sample with survey and qualitative insights from Australian Red Cross clients (migrants accessing support)



Online surveys:

- 1,925 valid responses collected over 2 weeks (**09/10 to 27/10**) via SurveyMonkey in 6 languages.
- 11 collected over the phone and entered in SurveyMonkey
- Participants had accessed Red Cross COVID-19 Emergency Relief support at some point between April and September 2020.



Semi-structured interviews:

- Red Cross clients: 24 (12 with and 12 without visas)
- Internal/External stakeholders: 22 - *Across all states and territories, including service providers, migrant networks, community organizations and government*



Focus Group discussions:

- People with and without visas: 1 with 30 participants
- Internal/external stakeholders: 5 with 62 participants in total *including volunteers, caseworkers, support officers, MSP managers/leads and government*

Context at time of data collection



- As of 27 September 2020, the WHO documented over 32.7 million COVID-19 cases and 991 000 deaths. In Southeast Asia and the Western Pacific there have been over 6.7 million confirmed cases. **In Australia, 27,063 confirmed cases in cumulation with 882 deaths.**
- In response, governments have put in place **a broad range of measures** aiming to limit the spread of the virus e.g., physical or social distancing, full or partial lock-downs, domestic and international border closures
- The virus itself and subsequent responses by governments have **affected different groups in different ways**, often depending on existing risks and vulnerabilities and access to basic services and support.
- In Australia: **1.9 million people were on temporary visas as at September 2020** and 70,000 people did not currently hold a valid visa in Australia either because they overstayed, have had their visa cancelled or are awaiting the grant of a further visa. **Most did not have access to a sustainable safety net.** Limited government support was available. Departure was rarely easy and at times not possible. These challenges remained at the time the Locked down Left out? Report release.

FINDINGS



Impacts of COVID-19

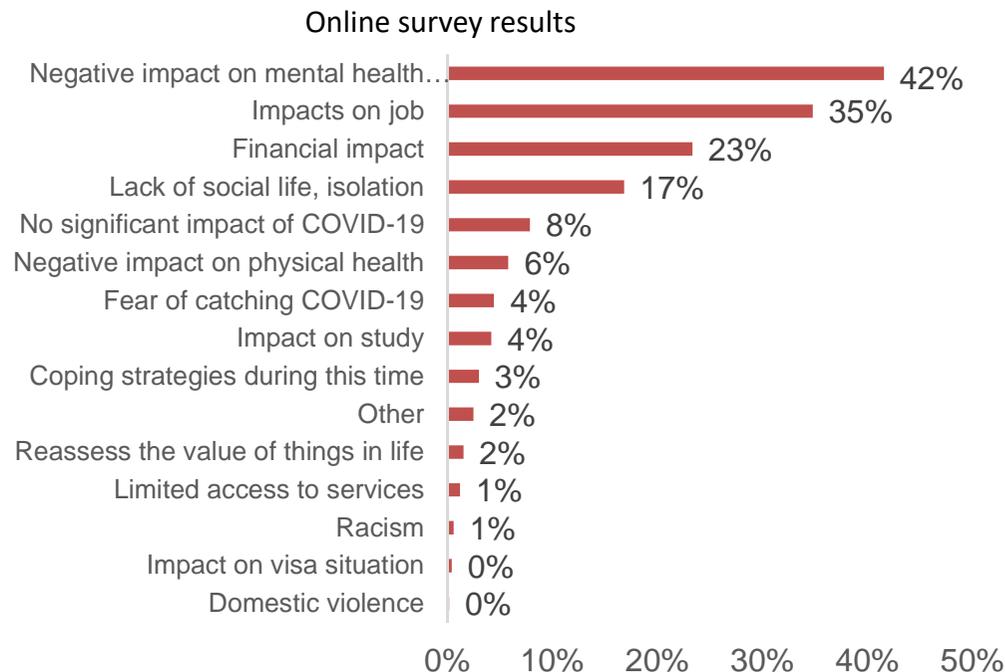


Survey responses:

- 58% of migrants surveyed online cited either job loss or financial impact as the most significant impact
- 42% of migrants surveyed online cited negative impacts on mental health as the most significant impact.

Interview responses:

- 87.5% of migrants interviewed noted worsened financial circumstances.
- 62% of migrants interviewed cited job loss as a key impact
- 30% of key stakeholders, including government and non-governmental organisations, reported increased domestic violence among migrants accessing their services



“No sleep, no nothing. No routine, strange fear [...]. I’ve never experienced or seen anything like that. But of course, no one’s seen anything like it though, have they?” (Person without a visa)

“Being at home for more than 7 months has been very depressing having various stress and financial pressures. I feared the financial crisis more than COVID 19” (Person with temp. visa)

Question: What has been the most significant impact of Covid-19 on your health and well-being while in Australia? (Open-ended) N=1306, T=1734

Barriers to keeping healthy and safe and accessing support



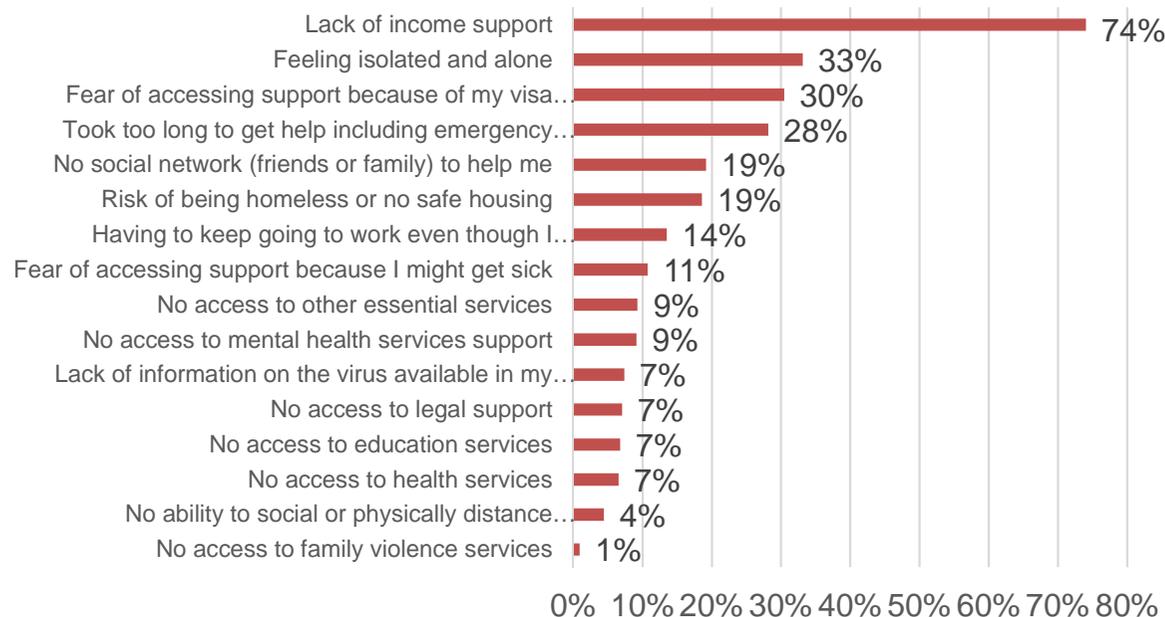
Survey responses:

- 74% of migrants surveyed online cited lack of income or financial support as the most significant impact.
- 30% of migrants surveyed online were afraid to access support due to their visa status (including fear that accessing support would impact their current or future visa or would lead to being reported to authorities).

Interview responses:

- 67% of undocumented migrants and 42% of migrants on temporary visas interviewed explicitly cited ineligibility due to visa status as the key barrier to accessing support.
- 50% of stakeholders noted fear of impact on visa as a barrier to accessing support.

Online survey results



“Because we’re not Australian citizens so there isn’t much for us to apply for, or to get assistance and stuff, which just made it worse for me and my kids around that time [...].” (Person with temp. visa)

“Mental health state is the actual barrier to accessing support, even where available from legal providers or NGOs or counsellors” (Sector stakeholder)

Question: What have been the biggest barriers for you to stay healthy and safe during the Covid-19 outbreak? (Select ALL that apply). N=1828, T=5110

Current urgent and unmet needs



Survey responses:

- 53% of migrants surveyed online reported food needs as an urgent unmet needs
- 44% of migrants surveyed online reported housing needs as an urgent unmet need.
- 32% of migrants surveyed online where unable to meet their or their children's education needs

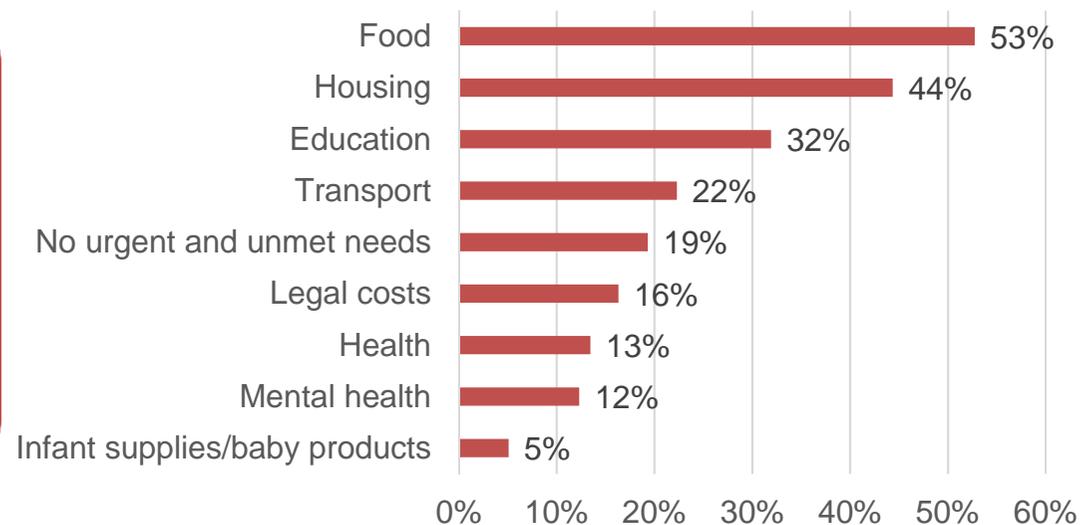
Interview responses:

- 60% of migrants on temporary visas interviewed reported having difficulty accessing accommodation due to the pandemic, as did 50% of undocumented migrants.

“Most urgent is food and accommodation to pay rent I mean, [...]I have a little one, so we have enough expenses, [...] we are paying \$350 per week for rent”. (Person on a temp. visa)

“To be honest, before COVID-19, my situation was the same. I mean I didn’t have nothing. I didn’t have a visa. I didn’t have the right to work. I didn’t have the Centrelink. I didn’t have the Medicare. I didn’t have none of these things since ages ago, before COVID-19 comes up.” (Person without a visa)

Online survey results

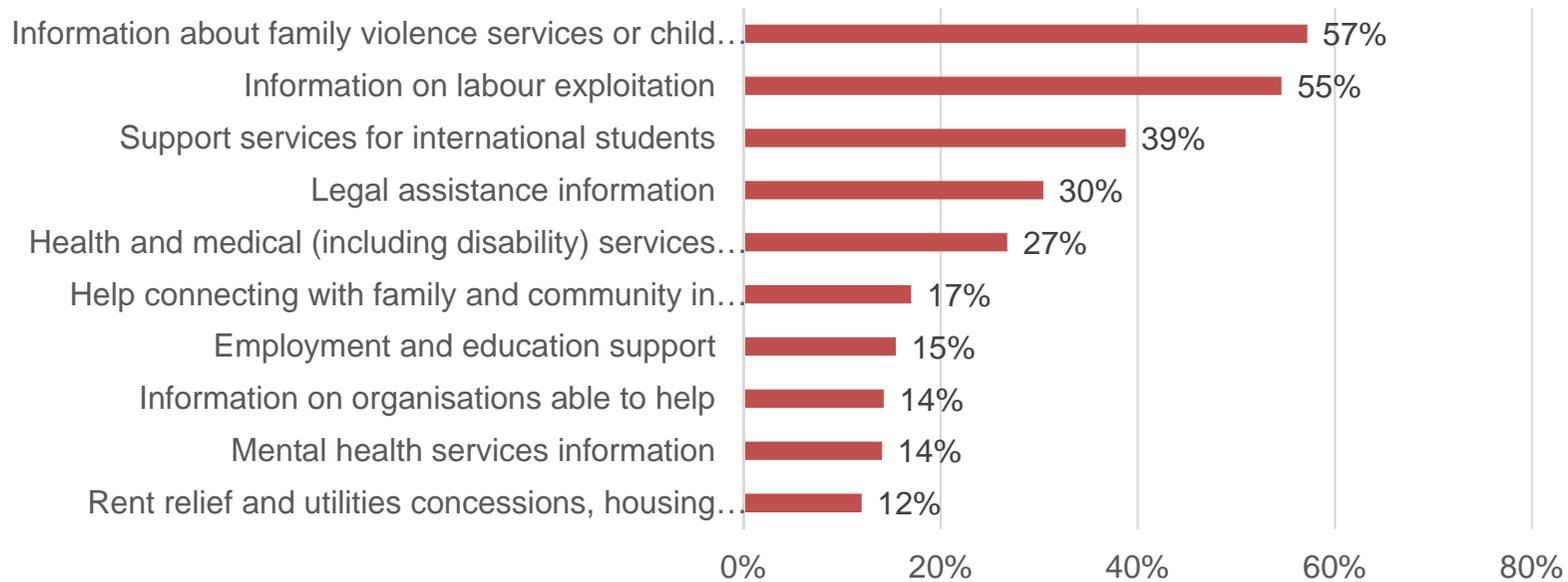


Question: Currently, do you have urgent needs to be met in the next week(s)? If so, what are they? (Select ALL that apply). N=1842, T=4014

Information needed at a time of crisis



Type of information provided by Red Cross



Channel to provide information



14% of respondents



37% of respondents



48% of respondents

Question: What information and resources did you receive from Australian Red Cross? (Select ALL that apply). N=575, T=1614

APPENDIX

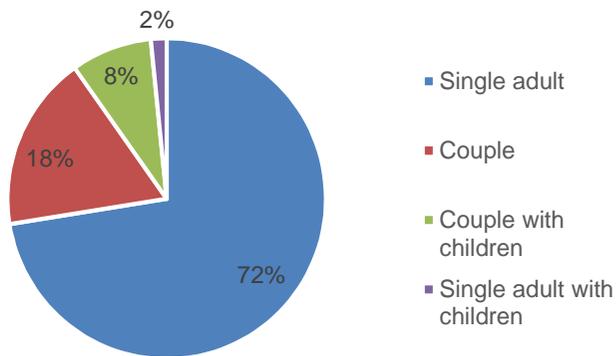


Demographics - Only includes survey respondents

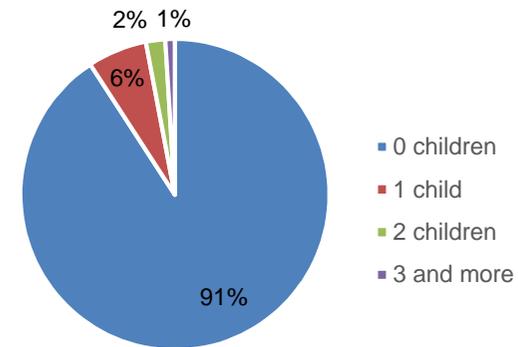


Diverse sample, representative of the overall Red Cross ER clients between April & September 2020

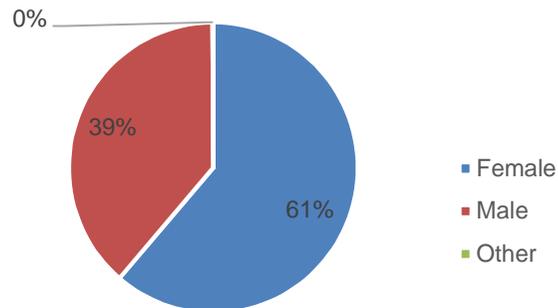
Household composition



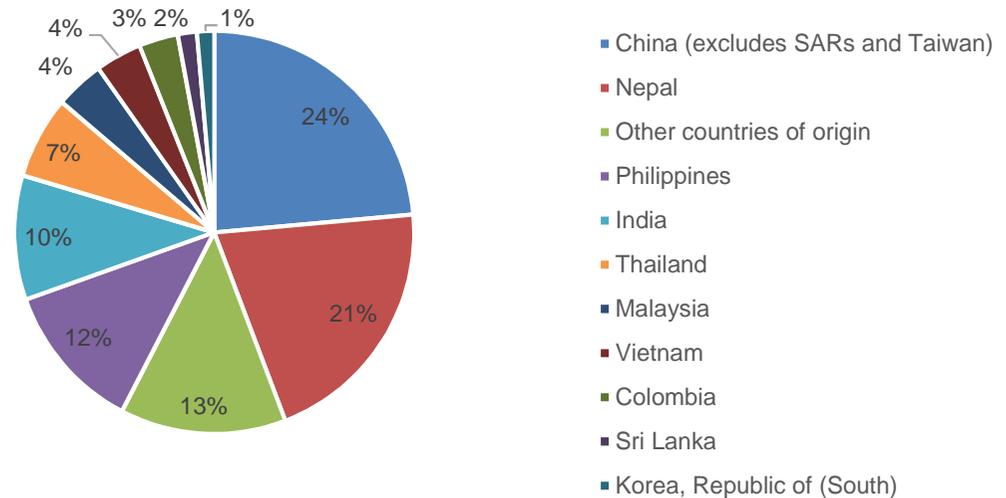
Number of dependents



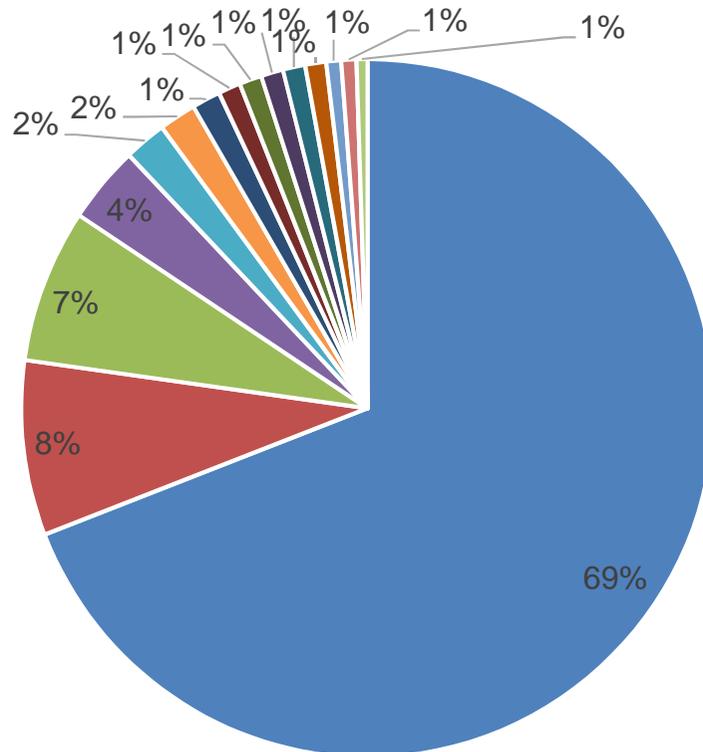
Gender



Country of origin



Visa Type – Survey Responses



- Student visa (Subclass 500)
- Temporary Graduate visa (Subclass 485)
- Bridging visa A – BVA - (Subclass 10)
- Other visa categories
- Bridging visa C – BVC – (Subclass 30)
- Work and Holiday visa (Subclass 462)
- Bridging visa E – BVE – (Subclass 050 and 051)
- Partner visa (Subclass 820 801)
- Skilled Regional (provisional) visa (Subclass 489)
- Temporary Work (Skilled) visa (Subclass 457)
- Working Holiday visa (Subclass 417)
- Temporary Skill Shortage visa (Subclass 482)
- Student Guardian visa (Subclass 580)
- Visitor (Subclass 600)
- Bridging visa B – BVB – (Subclass 20)

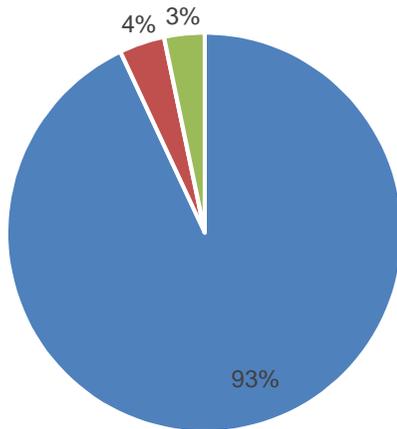
- In this sample, 23 people are registered as people seeking asylum
- 8 have an “uncertain” visa status on Red Cross client management system

Note: The % of international students that took part in the survey is commensurate with the % of international students that accessed Emergency Relief. International students also represent the highest number of temporary visa holders.

Demographics (survey)

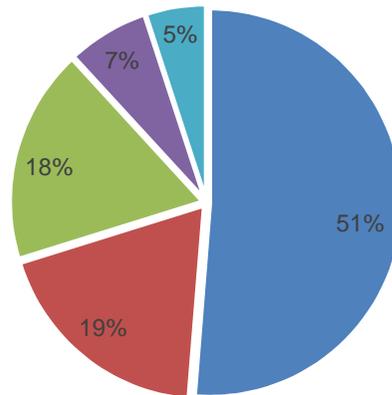


Household member with disability



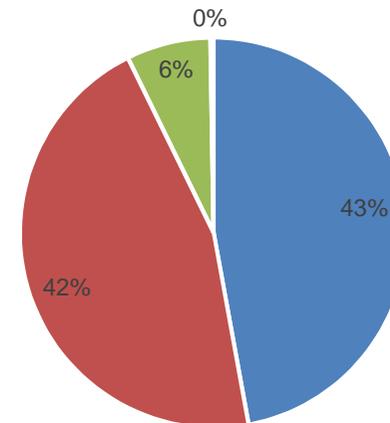
■ No ■ Not sure ■ Yes

Number of years in Australia



■ 1 to 3 years ■ 3 to 5 years ■ Less than 1 year
■ 5 to 7 years ■ More than 7 years

Housing situation



■ Stable housing (more than 6 months)
■ Temporary housing (less than 6 months)
■ Insecure housing (less than 2 months)
■ Homeless (nowhere to stay)

COVID-19 Emergency Relief (ER)



What is Emergency Relief?

- COVID-19 ER is building on a program already underway: “**Emergency Relief / Safety Net**” delivered through staff, volunteers and community, includes:
 - Financial Assistance
 - Casework + referrals
 - Information
 - Food packages
- Recognizes the gap in support for people on temporary visas in Australia

Impact of COVID-19 Emergency Relief:

- During the period covered by this study from April to 30 September 2020, over 34,000 people and 22,000 households benefitted from the financial assistance delivered through the nationwide, federally-funded COVID-19 Emergency Relief support program; in addition to over 12,000 people who accessed food relief. This included more than 2300 people identified as having a particular vulnerability and requiring further assessment and potential casework support
- **Funding** from Dept of Social Services, S/T Govs - NT, VIC, QLD, ACT, NSW, Lottery West, donors, partners.

Emerging needs during COVID:

- Financial vulnerability; housing insecurity; gaps in health care; deteriorating mental health; risks of exploitation and family violence

COVID-19 Emergency Relief (ER)



Australian Red Cross COVID-19 Emergency Relief Process Snapshot of nationwide program

ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA



- Urgent needs (such as food, medicine, housing, health)
- Financial hardship
- Not an Australian citizen or permanent resident



In parallel to the nationwide online application process:



DIRECT REFERRALS are made to Red Cross State / Territory offices by partner organisations working with clients at risk and with significant vulnerabilities.



FOOD PARCELS are provided in partnership with food charities and local community organisations around Australia