Refugees and people seeking asylum

People with refugee or asylum seeker status often face higher rates of mental health concerns due to the extra pressure caused by family separation, trauma, safety worries, detention, violations of human rights, or lack of access to basic needs such like food or shelter.

It is important to ensure you understand and use the correct terms for people's aslylum seeker or refugee status.

A refugee is someone who has legal protection because their status as a refugee has been determined.

A person seeking asylum is someone who has applied for protection after arriving in Australia, but a decision on their claim has not yet been made.

When talking about people with refugee or asylum seeker status it is important to reinforce that people's experiences are complex and varied.

Rates of seeking support by people from refugee and asylum seeker communities tend to be low. This can be for a number of reasons, including cost, language barriers, concerns that accessing support may affect their visa or asylum claim, focus on survival needs, and a lack of trust in services.

Providing opportunities for a range of people to tell their story in their own words helps people feel accurately represented. It also builds understanding among listeners of the diversity of personal experiences and may encourage others to seek support.

What next?

Read through the topics and considerations for your broadcast and then use the template to write down your ideas.

Broadcasters can help by:

- Sharing real stories of what has helped people from a refugee or asylum seeker background support their mental health, so others can see what's possible and learn from their experiences.
- Using respectful, and person-centred language, focusing on the individual rather than labels. This will increase understanding and awareness by putting the person at the centre of the story.
- Being mindful of trauma when discussing sensitive topics, and offering appropriate, practical ways for listeners to seek help or support.
- Promoting cultural understanding and inclusion, acknowledging the different backgrounds, identities, and intersections within refugee and asylum seeker communities.
- Providing information about support services specifically made for refugees, like the Witness to War helpline or dedicated services experienced in supporting the wellbeing of members of refugee and asylum-seeking communities. You can find out more about this program in the *Useful places to find more information and support* resource.