



Engagement and Impact 2018

Curtin University

CUT16 (SS) - Impact

Overview

Title

(Title of the impact study)

The fight for the right to work

Unit of Assessment

16 - Studies In Human Society

Additional FoR codes

(Identify up to two additional two-digit FoRs that relate to the overall content of the impact study.)

Socio-Economic Objective (SEO) Codes

(Choose from the list of two-digit SEO codes that are relevant to the impact study.)

94 - Law, Politics and Community Services

95 - Cultural Understanding

Australian and New Zealand Standard Industrial Classification (ANZSIC) Codes

(Choose from the list of two-digit ANZSIC codes that are relevant to the impact study.)

75 - Public Administration

77 - Public Order, Safety and Regulatory Services

Keywords

(List up to 10 keywords related to the impact described in Part A.)

asylum seekers

right to work

immigration policy

bridging visa E

refugee support

human rights

Sensitivities

Commercially sensitive

Culturally sensitive

Sensitivities description

(Please describe any sensitivities in relation to the impact study that need to be considered, including any particular instructions for ARC staff or assessors, or for the impact study to be made publicly available after EI 2018.)

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander research flag

(Is this impact study associated with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander content?)

NOTE - institutions may identify impact studies where the impact, associated research and/or approach to impact relates to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, nations, communities, language, place, culture and knowledges and/or is undertaken with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, nations, and/or communities.)

No

Science and Research Priorities

(Does this impact study fall within one or more of the Science and Research Priorities?)

No

Impact

Summary of the impact

(Briefly describe the specific impact in simple, clear English. This will enable the general community to understand the impact of the research.)

In 2012, a change to the Australian Government's immigration policy meant that asylum seekers living in the community under Bridging Visa E were unable to work and were restricted to an allowance that kept them substantially below the poverty line. Curtin University's Associate Professor Caroline Fleay and Dr Lisa Hartley studied the impact of the policy on asylum seekers. The study was covered by major media outlets and the researchers engaged directly with MPs, community groups, and government. In late 2014, the government announced that asylum seekers living in the community would be granted the right to work while they awaited the outcome of their claims. The CEO of the Refugee Council of Australia stated that the report made an important contribution to efforts to change the policy.

Beneficiaries

(List up to 10 beneficiaries related to the impact study)

Refugee Council of Australia

Australian political parties

holders of Bridging Visa E

Countries in which the impact occurred

(Search the list of countries and add as many as relate to the location of the impact)

Australia

Details of the impact

(Provide a narrative that clearly outlines the research impact. The narrative should explain the relationship between the associated research and the impact. It should also identify the contribution the research has made beyond academia, including:

- who or what has benefitted from the results of the research (this should identify relevant research end-users, or beneficiaries from industry, the community, government, wider public etc.)*
- the nature or type of impact and how the research made a social, economic, cultural, and/or environmental impact*
- the extent of the impact (with specific references to appropriate evidence, such as cost-benefit-analysis, quantity of those affected, reported benefits etc.)*
- the dates and time period in which the impact occurred.*

NOTE - the narrative must describe only impact that has occurred within the reference period, and must not make aspirational claims.)

Under a change to the Australian Government's immigration program in August 2012, asylum seekers who were released into community-based living on Bridging Visa E did not have the right to work. The policy meant the 27,000 asylum seekers who were subject to Bridging Visa E were entitled to no more than 89 percent of the Newstart allowance, with no opportunities to independently increase their income. This equated to approximately \$221 per week for a single person at the time, which was significantly below the poverty line.

Curtin University's Associate Professor Caroline Fleay and Dr Lisa Hartley conducted a substantial study into the psychological and financial impact of the policy on the affected people, with the aim of raising public awareness of

their experience and influencing policy-makers to enact policy and legislative change.

Hartley and Fleay were compelled to produce the report to give voice to asylum seekers, and to raise awareness and spark public dialogue on the issue. This impact was achieved. The report directly engaged 29 members of the asylum seeker community through its qualitative research process, and communicated the lived experience of those disenfranchised people to a wider audience. "The report gave people living those experiences the opportunity to express themselves because they are so often not heard in the public and political spheres," Fleay said.

The report achieved significant reach and media coverage, which enabled the researchers to fulfil their aim of raising awareness of this issue.

The report was published on 18 February 2014, with 300 copies distributed directly to all Federal MPs, as well as national refugee support agencies, and human rights groups. Fleay and Hartley were interviewed for five state and national television and radio shows on the ABC, SBS and Curtin FM, with print news stories about the report appearing across six different newspapers including community newspapers and The West Australian. In 2014, the report was the focus of an episode of ABC RN's 'Law Report' series, in which Associate Professor Fleay was interviewed.

The report was published online on the Australian Policy Online (APO) website, now known as the Analysis and Policy Observatory. The APO site awarded the report second place in its best resource awards in 2014 and featured the report on the website's list of most viewed research for the year. In August 2014, the Australia Research Council stated that the APO website received over half a million total visits each year.

The researchers see one of the important roles of their work as being able to connect the people they interview with relevant community and legal support services as appropriate. They see their role as research-led advocacy, and have participated in a range of local, state and national campaigns to help build advocacy networks for the rights of asylum seekers.

"Part of doing this research is about building communities, communities that try to have a respect for other people and recognise the importance of advocating for equality," Fleay says.

In support of this goal, Fleay and Hartley directly engaged end-users, including government and community groups that support asylum seekers and refugees. In 2014, the researchers presented their findings to a group of 100 professionals representing multicultural services at a youth settlement forum hosted by local government and the Multicultural Youth Advocacy Network WA.

The researchers engaged in substantial advocacy efforts with sitting MPs, who Fleay had provided with the report. "A few people from the major political parties have used our report in raising the issues around the right to work policy as well as similar issues such as asylum seekers languishing in detention," Fleay says. The report was also published as a resource on the Parliament of Australia's 'parlinfo' website as a relevant resource to the 'right to work'.

Upon the report's publication, the Refugee Council of Australia released a media statement endorsing the report and calling for specific policy change in this area. CEO Paul Power described the report, the only substantial study into the impacts of this policy, as making "an important contribution to efforts to get the government to bring about a change in policy, which they did later that year".

At the end of 2014, the Federal Government announced that asylum seekers living in the community would be granted the right to work while they continued to wait for their refugee claim to be processed.

Associated research

(Briefly describe the research that led to the impact presented for the UoA. The research must meet the definition of research in Section 1.9 of the EI 2018 Submission Guidelines. The description should include details of:

- what was researched*
- when the research occurred*
- who conducted the research and what is the association with the institution)*

Associate Professor Caroline Fleay and Dr Lisa Hartley from Curtin University's Centre for Human Rights Education authored the report Policy as Punishment: asylum seekers living in the community without the right to work in February 2014, detailing the experiences of asylum seekers in Australia who were released from

immigration detention to live among the Australian community, but denied the right to seek employment, as a condition of Bridging Visa E.

The project built upon a previous research project. 'Experiences of 'No Advantage': Asylum seekers in the community without the right to work' explored the experiences of asylum seekers who arrived by boat to Australia after 13 August 2012 and live in community-based arrangements. The focus has been on the impacts of living without the right to work and with only limited financial and social support. The research highlighted the financial hardship of not being able to work further aggravated by the ongoing uncertainty, distress and fear felt by asylum seekers who are experiencing ongoing delays in the processing of their refugee claims. This was jointly funded in 2013 by Curtin faculty and the Australia-Asia-Pacific Institute (AAPI) Seed Funding Grant. The research output of this project provided the start to the impact project.

FoR of associated research

(Up to three two-digit FoRs that best describe the associated research)

18 - Law and Legal Studies

16 - Studies in Human Society

References (up to 10 references, 350 characters per reference)

(This section should include a list of up to 10 of the most relevant research outputs associated with the impact)

Hartley, Lisa K. and Caroline Fleay, "Policy as Punishment: Asylum seekers in the community without the right to work", Australian Policy Online, February 2014.

Fleay, Caroline, Rezaie, Nadir Ali and Lisa Hartley. "Hidden: Asylum seekers living behind bricks and wire." Griffith Review 47: Looking West, edited by Julianne Schultz and Anna Haebich, 299–308. Melbourne, Vic.: TEXT Publishing, 2015.

Lisa Hartley, Caroline Fleay; (2017). "We are Like Animals": Negotiating Dehumanising Experiences of Asylum-Seeker Policies in the Australian Community, Refugee Survey Quarterly, 1–19.

Hartley, Lisa, Fleay, Caroline & Tye, Marian (2017). Exploring physical activity engagement and barriers for asylum seekers in Australia coping with prolonged uncertainty and no right to work. Health and Social Care in the Community.

Fleay, Caroline and Lisa Hartley. "'I Feel Like a Beggar': Asylum seekers living in the Australian community without the right to work". Journal of International Migration and Integration (2015): 1–18, doi: 10.1007/s12134-015-0453-x.

Fleay, Caroline, Hartley, Lisa and Mary Anne Kenny. "Refugees and asylum seekers living in the Australian community: The Importance of work rights and employment support." Australian Journal of Social Issues, 48, 4 (2013, released April 2014): 473–93.

Fleay, Caroline; Lumbus, Anita, and Lisa K. Hartley. "People seeking asylum in Australia and their access to

Additional impact indicator information

Additional impact indicator information

(Provide information about any indicators not captured above that are relevant to the impact study, for example return on investment, jobs created, improvements in quality of life years (QALYs). Additional indicators should be quantitative in nature and include:

- name of indicator (100 characters)*
- data for indicator (200 characters)*
- brief description of indicator and how it is calculated (300 characters).)*