

**OFFICERS' REPORT****JOINT STATEMENT ON CHANGES TO STATUS RESOLUTION SUPPORT SERVICES (SRSS)**

Submitting Councillor: Cr Josh Fergeus

**MOTION**

*That Council:*

- i) Endorses the Joint Statement against changes to the Status Resolution Support Services (SRSS); and*
- ii) Continues its involvement in advocating for people seeking asylum, and joins the Executive of the SRSS Mayoral taskforce, along with Brimbank, Greater Dandenong, Moreland, Yarra and Darebin Councils.*

**BUDGET IMPLICATIONS**

A commitment to advocacy against the changes to the Status Resolution Support Service is ongoing within the Community Strengthening team. This is delivered within Council's existing budget through existing officer time.

There is no additional budget implication as a result of this motion.

**IMPACT ON INTERNAL RESOURCES**

This project will be managed by existing staff resources within the Community Strengthening department with support from local stakeholder organisations and neighbouring Councils where applicable.

**COUNCIL PLAN AND COUNCIL POLICIES**

Advocacy on this issue aligns with Council's prior advocacy in regards to changes to the SRSS Program as shown in the Changes to the SRSS Program Advocacy Report to Council (29 May 2018), letter to the Hon Peter Dutton, Minister for Home Affairs (18 June 2018) and participation in the Mayoral Taskforce meeting (31 July 2018).

This motion also strongly aligns with Council's 'A Healthy and Resilient Monash: Integrated Plan 2017 - 2021'. In particular, the recommendations support the priority *Engaged, Confident and Connected - Belonging*, which seeks 'to engage and support those that are isolated in our community with a particular focus on newly arrived and temporary residents.

Council has made a significant commitment through the adoption of "A Healthy and Resilient Monash Integrated Plan 2017-2021 to strive towards a healthy, resilient and socially inclusive diverse community. Council actively promotes inclusion of those who may be vulnerable and experiencing isolation including newly arrived and temporary residents.

Actions stated within this plan include: facilitating social and economic participation for all, building intercultural understanding between different ethnic and cultural groups. By advocating for the reversal of changes to the SRSS program and improvements in professional

job readiness and employment support, and provision of essential community service assistance, will contribute to building strong and cohesive communities that promote the inclusion and participation of everyone, including those seeking asylum.

In addition, the City of Monash signed the Refugee Welcome Zone Declaration in 2002. A Refugee Welcome Zone is a local government area that has made a commitment to welcoming refugees into the community, upholding their human rights, demonstrating compassion and enhancing cultural and religious diversity in the community.

***RELEVANCE TO WORK ALREADY UNDERTAKEN BY OFFICERS OR COMMITTEES***

Monash Council has been a leading advocate on multicultural issues, including those relating to support for refugees and people seeking asylum and resettlement in Australia.

Monash officers work closely with a range of non-Government organisations and community service providers through formal networks such as the Monash Multicultural Settlement Services Network to ensure that refugees and asylum seekers living in the Monash area are well-supported.