



Mario

Mario* doesn't want anyone to know he is seeking asylum because he fears rejection from his own community. He doesn't have work rights while he awaits an outcome of his protection visa application.

“ I'm 22 years old, I'm strong, intelligent, I don't want to live off charity, I want to work to make my own future & even taught myself English when I was little by watching Pokemon and Friends, on top of my school classes. I already did half of a bachelor's degree in my home country before I was obliged to get out of there.

But here in Australia, I can't legally work right now, so I don't have enough money to live, and I can't finish my studies because of my status.

I go to the ASRC Foodbank on Monday and get my groceries for the week. I cook all the food for the week and everything goes to the freezer. I love making lentil soup with rice (I put carrots and peas in my rice, just like my mum did), and I also make vegetable soups that when I heat up I crack an egg in there and it makes the soup more delicious.

Then Tuesday to Sunday, it's all about my three jobs washing dishes and kitchen hand in two places and cleaning construction spaces after 5pm.

I got a bicycle from a charity in Richmond and that is my transport. When I ride between jobs, I can't help but visualise I'm moving towards the day I get the call saying "Mario! Your application was approved!".

Let me work, let me study! And I'll change your country."

*Name changed to protect the identity of people seeking asylum