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Conversation Cards

Have insightful conversations about the experiences of people seeking asylum.

Take turns to read the discussion point on the front of each card and listen to each other's response. Once everyone has answered, turn the card over to see how your answers are connected to the lives of people seeking asylum.



QUESTION:

You have to leave town tonight urgently and you can only take five things with you.

What would they be and why?

To apply for a protection visa in Australia, a family seeking asylum will need to provide information and evidence of their identity, travel history, education, and the names of family members and their date of births. This is easier with a passport, school records, birth or marriage certificate for not only themselves, but their family members too.

Did anyone mention one of those?

If they are facing persecution it may not be safe to apply for documentation from their government or they may not be recognised as a citizens. Likewise, in times of conflict, there may be no time to apply for a passport and the institution that issues documentation may not be operational. This makes applying for protection even harder.



QUESTION:

Can you give the details of all residential addresses where you have lived in the last 20 years and the exact dates you lived there?

This question is on the application form for a protection visa and is closely matched to the person's statement for why they need protection.

Did you remember to include any periods of travel when you were away from home for more than a week or two? Neglecting to include periods of displacement, such as when a person goes into hiding for their safety, can lead a decision maker to doubt the accuracy of a person's entire claim for protection and may contribute to a refusal of a protection visa.



QUESTION:

What do you think would be a fair way to enable people seeking asylum to pay for everyday living expenses like food, clothing, heating, somewhere to live and basic medical needs while they are awaiting the outcome of their claim for protection?

Every single person needs a home. Many people seeking asylum are denied the right to work, do not receive a benefit and have no way to earn income, leading to homelessness. Lack of income is a major stress point. For many, their only options can be to seek out support from organisations like the ASRC, rely on strangers or in the worst-case scenario: sleep rough, on the street.



QUESTION:

Name three significant milestones that have occurred in your personal, professional or student life over the past five years.

The refugee status determination process is complex and some families find themselves in limbo for many years. For example, the ASRC is currently supporting someone in a detention centre that has been there for the past 5 years with no indication of when they can leave. One can only imagine how many of life's milestones and opportunities they have missed in that time.



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QUESTION:

When was the last time you completed a lengthy survey or had to read a legal document?

The Protection Visa application form is 110 questions and 41 pages long and is only available in the English language. It requests details of every area of your life, from where you lived, to everywhere you have worked including the addresses, and even your family history. If English is not your first language, how would you complete the application, prepare a detailed statement and submit evidence to support your application without the help of a lawyer?



QUESTION:

Imagine relaying the account of the most horrific, traumatic time in your life over and over again to strangers.

Could you do it repeatedly, word for word, years after you first told it?

People seeking asylum are repeatedly asked to recount details of the violence, torture and traumatic situations they have endured in their home countries. If their most recent account does not match all the details from a previous account or contains more details than a previous account, it will be questioned at an interview or a hearing by a decision maker and that decision maker is within their power to make a negative inference from the different accounts. This may lead to the finding that the person is not truthful, and a protection visa could be refused.



QUESTION:

What is one issue you deeply care about that you would like to see changed through government policy, and which politician would you like to see champion this change?

Our movement will only be powerful and successful when people from refugee backgrounds and people seeking asylum are leading it. They know from first hand experience and through community connection what their communities need and that makes them the best spokespeople and change makers for the refugee justice movement. This is why ASRC runs the Community, Advocacy & Power Program to train refugees and people seeking asylum in community organising and advocacy



QUESTION:

You have to start a new job, but it can't be the one you are trained for.

What would you do for work?

What obstacles would you face in getting that job?

Most adults who seek asylum in Australia have already worked for many years in their home countries. If they are given the right to work in Australia, the ASRC supports them to understand and enter the Australian labour market. In some cases, highly educated pharmacists, engineers and teachers work in hospitality or administration while navigating a return to their chosen profession.



QUESTION:

You see something in the media about the continued poor treatment of refugees and people seeking asylum by the government. Perhaps its a disease outbreak at a detention centre, a family experiencing homelessness or a powerful speech by a refugee advocate on the news.

What do you do afterwards?

You can join the movement. Stand up and take action as effectively as possible by joining ASRC advocacy workshops, calling MPs and helping facilitate debate around election times. See asrc.org.au for more details.