

## **Issue:Hoax Email (refugee)**

An email is circulating claiming an Australian old-age pensioner receives only \$1024 per month in benefits, while a single man arriving in Australia as a refugee receives over \$2000 a month.

The monthly allowance figures quoted in the email complaint bear no resemblance to the payments provided to single people under Australia's income support system, or to payments available to asylum seekers under the ASA scheme.

The text and figures used in the email appear in a number of Canadian emails, websites and internet chatrooms which attribute the complaint to Canada's payments to refugees and pensioners. This suggests that the complaint did not originate in, or originally relate to, Australia. We suspect the email circulating here has been cut and pasted from, for example, these links below:

[http://www.discovervancouver.com/forum/topic.asp?TOPIC\\_ID=96967](http://www.discovervancouver.com/forum/topic.asp?TOPIC_ID=96967)

<http://marketingbling.blogspot.com/2005/08/pensioner-vs-refugee-status-in-canada.html>

In Australia's case, refugees granted permanent visas are permanent residents, and can access Centrelink benefits if they need them on the same basis and at the same rates as any other Australian permanent resident.

Refugees granted temporary visas do not have access to the full range of Centrelink benefits. If needed, they can access only Centrelink Special Benefits, and this is also on the same basis and at the same rates as apply to Australian residents.

There is no separate rate of benefit payment for refugees. (Information on support payment rates can be obtained from Centrelink.)

Refugees settling in Australia receive no cash payments under the Integrated Humanitarian Settlement Strategy, but the Department of Immigration and Citizenship assists eligible refugees during their early settlement period with some support services on a needs basis, including in-kind assistance by way of a package of goods to start a household, and subsidised rent and utilities costs for the first four weeks in the country.

Asylum seekers in Australia who have not yet had their protection claims decided have no access to Centrelink benefits. The Asylum Seeker Assistance (ASA) Scheme, administered by the Australian Red Cross, provides some publicly funded financial assistance to eligible asylum seekers who are unable to meet their most basic support needs. These payments are means tested fortnightly and cannot exceed 89% of Centrelink Special Benefit payments.

*Australian Government*

*Department of Immigration and Citizenship*

Letter to the Editor – Whitehorse Leader  
21 February

Dear Sir/Madam

In response to Mr Sauerwein's letter (Prioritise pensioners, letters, 20/2/08) regarding a claim that more monthly assistance is provided to refugee entrants than to pensioners, let me tell him there is no truth to the report.

Mr Sauerwein, like many other Australians, has fallen victim to a hoax email.

The monthly allowance figures quoted in the letter bear no resemblance to the payments provided to single people under Australia's income support system, or to payments available to asylum seekers under the Asylum Seeker Assistance scheme.

The text and figures used in the letter appear in a number of Canadian emails, websites and internet chatrooms which attribute the complaint to Canada's payments to refugees and pensioners. This suggests that the complaint neither originated in, nor originally related to, Australia.

In Australia's case, refugees granted permanent visas are permanent residents, and can gain access to Centrelink benefits if they need them on the same basis and at the same rates as any other Australian permanent resident.

Sandi Logan  
National Communications Manager  
Department of Immigration and Citizenship  
Ph: (02) 6264 2244