



Media release  
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## **GOVERNMENT LISTENS TO COMMUNITY PLEAS BY ADDING 16,500 NEW PLACES FOR AFGHAN REFUGEES**

The Refugee Council of Australia (RCOA) has welcomed the announcement in the 2022 Federal Budget of 16,500 additional places for refugees from Afghanistan over the next four years.

"By setting aside 16,500 additional refugee places, the Morrison Government has listened to the concerns of many Australians who have felt that Australia could and must do more to support Afghan citizens at risk after the Taliban takeover of their country in August," RCOA chief executive officer Paul Power said.

"A campaign for 20,000 additional places has been led by Australia's Afghan diaspora and supported by many organisations, faith groups, veterans and citizens.

"While the announced additional intake is a little smaller than that advocated by the national community campaign, these 16,500 additional places will provide hope and safety for some of the Afghan nationals most at risk, including people who worked with Australian forces and organisations in Afghanistan, separated family members, women and children at risk, LGBTIQ people and members of religious and ethnic minorities.

"The 4,125 additional places a year over four years will supplement the 13,750 places per year already in the Refugee and Humanitarian Program, lifting the combined annual total to 17,875 places. This will create greater room for the resettlement of refugees displaced by persecution in other countries including Myanmar, Iraq, Syria, Ethiopia, South Sudan and the Democratic Republic of Congo, as well as providing options for the permanent protection of Ukrainians if the current conflict continues.

"The additional intake of 16,500 places is a substantial restoration of visas removed from the Refugee and Humanitarian Program or lost over the past two years. The annual program was cut by 5,000 places per year in the 2020 Budget from its previous level of 18,750 places. In the past two financial years, 13,382 of the remaining visas were never issued during the COVID-19 pandemic, with the lost places not rolled over into subsequent years.

"In January, Immigration Minister Alex Hawke announced the Government would allocate 10,000 humanitarian and 5,000 family places for Afghan nationals over the four years to June 2025. The additional 16,500 humanitarian places over the four years from July 2022 to June 2026 will increase the number of visas for displaced Afghan to 31,500 over a five-year period (26,500 humanitarian and 5,000 family visas).

"The Budget papers show that the cost of the Government's offshore processing policy has blown out substantially for the seventh time in eight years. Estimated actual spending for offshore processing in 2021-22 will be \$958 million, a blowout of \$146 million on the funds allocated in last year's Budget. With \$482.5 million set aside for the offshore processing policy in 2022-23 despite the very small numbers of refugees remaining in offshore locations, the total cost of the policy will be \$9.65 billion over the 10 years since July 2013."

For further comment or to arrange an interview, contact our media team on 0488 035 535 or at [media@refugeecouncil.org.au](mailto:media@refugeecouncil.org.au).