



Looking to the future: Extending the hand of welcome as Afghani asylum seekers released from quarantine

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South Australian refugee advocates welcome the imminent release of newly arrived Afghani asylum seekers from 14 days of quarantine detention in Adelaide. After their traumatic exit from Afghanistan, they were placed in quarantine hotel accommodation on arrival in Adelaide and have now served the required period of isolation necessary to enter the broader community. They should be released from hotel quarantine this weekend.

The South Australian community has already responded with welcome and generosity to these new arrivals. We note the words of support from Steven Marshall and Peter Malinauskas, who both attended the candlelit vigil for Afghanistan on 21 August 2021 and have extended their warm support to these asylum seekers fleeing the Taliban's newly installed government in Afghanistan.

Australians from all walks of life have welcomed the arrival of these new asylum seekers and have been vividly aware of the chaotic collapse of the administration formed during the US and coalition forces' presence in Afghanistan. We must now provide a unified pathway to permanent residence for all those who have come to Australia seeking refuge from the Taliban.

"Now more than ever", Rev Sandy Boyce, Chair of Justice for Refugees SA, said, "we must be clear that there was never an orderly queue to exit Afghanistan. Fleeing asylum seekers were faced with many difficult decisions as they exited Afghanistan, including, for some, having to break up their families to enable some of them to reach safety."

The process was difficult, not only because the Australian Government was slow to arrange an exit in a timely manner for many of those people and their families, but also because, once Kabul fell, it has been difficult, if not impossible, to arrange any exit at all. Many of those trying to exit have been blocked by circumstances and will need to exit in a variety of different ways.

"Many of these asylum seekers have previously offered Australian forces support during their service in Afghanistan. Consequently, Australia now has unfinished business with regard to those fleeing persecution and death at the hands of the newly installed regime" said Rev Boyce.

"We cannot justify – now or ever - discriminating against refugees and asylum seekers on the basis of their mode of arrival. We need the one pathway to permanence for all Afghanis found to be genuine refugees." Rev Boyce said the Government must not risk creating different classes of

refugee status based on when and how Afghan asylum seekers reached Australia. All deserve proper protection and adequate support as they try to reconstruct their lives in a new country.

Justice for Refugees SA is a non-partisan community organisation working for the just and humane treatment of people seeking asylum in Australia and those who come to Australia as refugees building on Australian traditions of generosity, openness, and fairness.

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