



Open Letter to the elected representatives of the Australian people

Dear Elected Representatives of the Australian people

We the undersigned salute your decision to increase the nation's intake of Afghan nationals over the coming years and your description of the number of 3000 refugees as a floor not a ceiling. We support your call to the future government of Afghanistan to "respect the human rights of all its citizens, especially women and girls" and that the international community hold any future Afghan government to account.

Both these announcements are a small start, but without clear and decisive action they will be nothing more than wishful thinking.

Twenty years ago Australia was one of the first nations to join the US-led intervention in Afghanistan to remove the Taliban. Over the last two decades Australia made promises to protect and promote democratic freedoms, human rights, the rule of law, the rights of women, and minority groups. Australia's commitment contributed to an education for millions of Afghan girls, women being able to work, a vibrant and free press, and improved protection for minority groups.

As the Taliban tightens its grip on the nation, these achievements are being laid to waste in plain view of the watching world. This is a not a moment for wishful thinking or wringing of hands; this is a moment for action to protect those to whom we made promises and those who aspired for more.

To that end we are calling on you as our elected representatives to take three clear actions to bring about a different outcome from the one we are all witnessing right now.

1. To work with other countries to ensure that people who wish to leave Afghanistan remain free to do so. There is little point in increasing the nation's intake if those who would come cannot leave or are killed waiting for sanctuary.
2. Australia commit to taking 20,000 people in danger in addition to the existing humanitarian intake.
3. Grant permanent residency to those living here on temporary protection visas and fast track family reunion. The truth is they will never be able to return to their home country. Today we need to deal with these realities and not be held hostage to past ideologies and scapegoating.

The Catholic community across Australia stands ready to work with you to support all those who come to us seeking protection and a safe life. We have the resources of health, education, welfare and love to hold those who need this support now. We commit our resources to this endeavour.

We ask only that you take immediate action to evacuate our friends and families from Afghanistan and into our communities where we will care for them.

Yours sincerely,

Bishop Vincent Long	Chair	Australian Catholic Bishops Conference Commission for Social Justice - Mission and Service
Bishop Greg O'Kelly	Bishop	Archdiocese of Adelaide and Diocese of Port Pirie
Bishop Charles Gauci	Bishop	Diocese of Darwin
Br Peter Carroll FMS	President	Catholic Religious Australia
Fr. Peter Smith	Promoter of Justice and Peace	Justice and Peace Office, Catholic Archdiocese of Sydney
Tamara Domicelj	Director/Co-Chair	JRS Australia/Catholic Alliance for People Seeking Asylum
Sebastian Salaske-Lentern	Social Justice Coordinator	Catholic Diocese of Parramatta
Sandie Cornish	Director	Office for Justice Ecology and Peace
Miriam Pellicano	CEO	St. Francis Social Services and House of Welcome
Sr. Brigid Arthur csb	Founder and Coordinator	Brigidine Asylum Seeker Project
Sr. Stancea Vichie mss	Congregational Leader	Missionary Sisters of Service, Australia
Sr. Monica Walsh	Province Leader	Sisters of the Good Shepherd, Australia
Sr. Patty Fawkner SGS	Congregational Leader	Sisters of the Good Samaritan Australia
Sr. Clare Nolan RSC	Congregational Leader	Sisters of Charity Australia
Brian Lawrence	Chairman	Australian Cardijn Institute
Very Rev Peter Jones OSA	Prior Provincial	Order of St. Augustine, Province of Australasia
Louise Miller Frost	CEO	St Vincent De Paul Society (SA)
Jack de Groot	CEO	St Vincent De Paul Society (NSW)
Claire Victory	National President	St Vincent De Paul Society National Council of Australia
Helen Forde	CEO	Jesuit Mission
Phil Glendenning	Director	Edmund Rice Centre
Julie Edwards	CEO/Co-Chair	Jesuit Social Services/Catholic Alliance for People Seeking Asylum
Fr. Tom McDonough	Provincial Superior	Passionist Brothers of Australia
Richard Haddock	Chair	Mary Aikenhead Ministries

Justice, Peace, Ecology, Development

John Lochowiak	Chairperson	National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Council
Mark Phillips	CEO	Catholic Care Sydney
Fergus Fitzsimons	CEO	Centracare New England NorthWest, The Social Services Agency of the Catholic Diocese of Armidale
Very Rev Fr. Brian McCoy SJ	Provincial	Jesuit Province of Australia
Sr. Eveline Crotty	Institute Leader	Institute of Sisters of Mercy of Australia and PNG
Peter Loughnane	CEO	Catholic Care - Western Sydney and the Blue Mountains
Toby Hall	Group CEO	St. Vincent's Health Australia
Auxiliary Bishop Terry Brady	Auxiliary Bishop	Catholic Archdiocese of Sydney
Dr. Frank Malloy	National Director	Marist Schools Australia
Rebecca Bromhead	CEO	Marist Solidarity Australia
Sr Louise McKeogh	Provincial	Salesian Sisters, South Pacific Region
Sr. Mary-Louise Petro RSM	Congregation Leader	Sisters of Mercy Parramatta
Sr Monica Cavanagh	Congregational Leader	Sisters of St Joseph of the Sacred Heart
Sr Jan Barnett	Josephite Justice Coordinator	Josephite Justice Network
Dr Cristina Lledo Gomez	Chair	Australian Catholic Social Justice Council
Beata Ostapiej-Piatkowski	Manager	Romero Centre
Fr Gerard Heffernan	Parish Priest	Braken Ridge Parish
Sr. Brigette Sipa	Regional Leader	Sisters of St Joseph, Centre West Region
Sr Mary Clare Holland OP	Prioress	Dominican Sisters of Eastern Australia and the Solomon Islands
Cath Garner	Group Director Mission & Cabrini Outreach	Cabrini Health