

MEDIA RELEASE

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Christians
United for
Afghanistan

Gov's 15,000 Afghan visas a "mean and tricky" attempt disguise inaction

Christian leaders, as part of the Christians United for Afghanistan campaign, are urging Australians to not be fooled by the Morrison government's announcement of 15,000 refugee places for fleeing Afghans, saying it's a mean and tricky move to disguise Australia's disappointing humanitarian response.

Immigration Minister Alex Hawke's announcement that over the next four years 10,000 humanitarian and 5,000 family visas will be set aside for those who have or are fleeing Afghanistan isn't additional to Australia's already small annual intake of 13,750 people. Many of the approximately 5,000 Afghans who have already arrived in Australia will now need to apply for one of those 10,000 humanitarian visa spots.

"Prime Minister Scott Morrison is on the record saying there's no cap to the number of Afghan refugees Australia can take - but it appears there is and it's a paltry 15,000 over four years," said Reverend Tim Costello, the executive director of Micah Australia. "2,500 people a year isn't compassionate, it's bare minimum."

"The Morrison government's inadequate humanitarian response is a stain on our nation. This isn't a compassionate response, it's just more mean and tricky spin to disguise the Morrison's government's complete inaction."

Rev Costello said by comparison in 2017 Australia lifted its humanitarian intake in response to the conflicts in Syria and Iraq when it offered an additional 12,000 people safety, on top of the annual humanitarian intake.

Christian leaders have called for 20,000 Afghans to be granted humanitarian visas, in addition to Australia's annual intake.

"We spent two decades in Afghanistan as part of the military campaign - it is our moral duty to bring as many people to safety as we can," said Reverend Sharon Hollis, President of the Uniting Church in Australia.

"Christian leaders have consistently called for 20,000 Afghans to be taken in as an additional intake. Australia's humanitarian cap was cut by 5,000 in 2020 to 13,750 - so we've been progressively shrinking our intake as it is."

Reverend Mark Wilson, head of Australian Baptist Ministries, said: "I believe, as a nation, we can and should do better. We have a responsibility to the Afghan people."

Sydney's Anglican Archbishop Kanishka Raffel said Australians must not forget the Afghan people as the news cycle moved on: "We set out to offer hope and liberty to these people and we must

not fail them at this crucial and desperate time. The government's response makes no additional provision for Afghan intake, and this is seemingly out of step with widespread community goodwill to Afghans seeking refuge from the Taliban regime."

Melissa Lispett, chief executive of Baptist World Aid Australia, said it was disappointing there were no additional places for Afghans: "Despite our current domestic and Covid related difficulties we do have boundless plains to share for those who come across the seas. I pray that we would have the courage and humanity to do so."