

Current Options for Afghanistan citizens and Australian Citizens and Permanent Residents in Afghanistan

This fact sheet sets out some of the options for citizens of Afghanistan seeking asylum in Australia, people in Australia wishing to assist relatives and people in Afghanistan and Australian Citizens and Permanent Residents in Afghanistan following the current conflict and Taliban offensive.

While the legal situation remains the same, this fact sheet outlines how the change in circumstances in Afghanistan might affect your immigration status and what you can do to assist people at risk of harm in Afghanistan.

This Fact Sheet provides some suggested responses to some Frequently Asked Questions

- *I am an Australian Citizen or Visa holder in Afghanistan, how can I get help?* - see page 2
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I am an Australian Citizen or Visa holder in Afghanistan, how can I get help?

As at 19 August 2021, the following information has been provided by DFAT with respect to Australians in Afghanistan:

The Australian Government is working to bring Australians and their families home. Make sure you have registered with DFAT: <https://covid19.dfat.gov.au>. We will contact you to provide more information soon. Do not travel to the airport unless advised by the Australian Government to do so. Shelter in place. Have a plan in place to travel to the airport at short notice. Australians in need of consular assistance should contact the Australian Government 24-hour Consular Emergency Centre on 1300 555 135 in Australia or +61 2 6261 3305 outside Australia. Take all extra precautions for your safety. Review your personal security plans and be aware of your surroundings and local security developments.

If you are an Australian citizen or visa holder in Afghanistan, you can email: afghan.eoi@dfat.gov.au

For further information, and to ensure that you have the most up to date information, we suggest that you check the DFAT website: <https://www.smartraveller.gov.au/destinations/asia/afghanistan>

Further contact information on how to contact DFAT can be found at: <https://www.dfat.gov.au/contact-us>

Getting Practical Assistance in Afghanistan and Neighbouring Countries

As the situation in Afghanistan is changing, please check the Fact Sheet ***Getting Practical Assistance in Afghanistan and Neighbouring Countries*** on the RACS website: <https://www.racs.org.au/fact-sheets> We will try to keep this up to date as New Information becomes available.

I am from Afghanistan but currently in Australia with a visa or no visa, how do the recent events in Afghanistan affect my visa status?

The current situation in Afghanistan will affect people in Australia differently, depending on where you are at in the legal process.

- If you have **not applied for a Protection Visa**, you should **call RACS on 8355 7227 for advice about your options**. Some information about the process can be found here: <https://www.racs.org.au/fact-sheets>
- If you have applied for a **Protection Visa, that is still being considered and by the Department of Home Affairs, the Immigration Assessment Authority (IAA) or the Administrative Appeals Tribunal (AAT)**, You can provide more information about the changes in Afghanistan and how they affect you to the Department, the IAA or the AAT. You can **call RACS for advice and assistance to do this**.
- If you **had a Protection Visa refused by the IAA or AAT, and have a case at the Federal Circuit Court, Federal Court, or High Court or have requested the Minister to intervene in your case**, you may want to write to the Minister to request that he intervenes under s48B of the *Migration Act 1958* to let you make another application for a Protection Visa. **You can call RACS for advice and assistance to do this**.
- If you **have a Bridging Visa and have been on Nauru or Manus Island**, you may have options for resettlement to the United States or another Country. You can call RACS for advice and assistance to request this.
- If you **have a permanent visa and are applying for citizenship**, you may be able to write to the Department to expedite processing. You should call RACS to see how we can assist.

I want to check on my family in Afghanistan – what can I do?

For family members who have lost contact with relatives in Afghanistan due to the current situation, the Restoring Family Links team at Australian Red Cross can assess your case and work through our Family Links Network:

Please note this may take some time due to the current situation.

The RFL Hotline is available Monday to Friday 9am to 5pm (AEST) on 1800 875 199 or via tracing@redcross.org.au

I want to sponsor my family in Afghanistan or a neighbouring country to come to Australia, what can I do?

If you have a **permanent visa or are an Australian Citizen**, you can sponsor your family under the Offshore Humanitarian Visa Program as part of a 'split family' application or through the Family Stream (e.g. Partner visa or child visa). This information also applies if your family is no longer in Afghanistan but has fled to a neighbouring country.

The Offshore Humanitarian Visas

- Allow people to apply to come to Australia and for Australian citizens and permanent residents to propose family members.
- Less than 10% of applications for these are successful.
- Applications are more likely to be successful if:
 - The person applying assisted the Australian Defence Force or Government in Afghanistan
 - The person applying is the partner (such as a wife or husband) or child of an Australian Permanent Resident

Note: People granted permanent Protection Visas (Subclass 866) are the lowest priority. Even if successful, the waiting time for a visa to be granted is likely to be more than a year.

For more information about these visas, you can visit the Department's website [here](#) or RACS' website [here](#).

For advice about whether your family members will be eligible for these visas, you can call RACS and book an appointment.

The Family Stream:

- Allows Australian citizens and permanent residents to sponsor family members.
- There are many different visas you can apply for, which one is best depends on who you want to sponsor.
- Visas under the family stream can cost thousands of dollars.
- The waiting time to apply can be many months and often years.

For more information about these visas, you can visit the Department's website [here](#).

For advice about whether your family members will be eligible for these visas, you can call RACS and book an appointment.

Note: If you have already applied for a **Partner Visa** and have been waiting a long time, please contact RACS and we will see if we can assist you to make the process faster.

If you hold a temporary visa, bridging visa or do not have an Australian visa, you cannot sponsor or propose family members to come to Australia. In some cases, organisations can help you sponsor people.

Call RACS if you would like advice on your options as to what your options are to try to sponsor family members if you hold a temporary visa, bridging visa or do not have an Australian visa.

I know someone who worked with the Australian forces, is there extra help for them?

People who worked as interpreters or staff with the Australian government or military may be eligible for priority assistance.

If you fall into this category, please contact RACS for assistance.

I just want to do something to help, what can I do?

You can sign the Online Petition here: <https://www.actionforafghanistan.com.au/>

You could contact [your local federal Member of Parliament](#) and express your concern. A template letter you could use on the following page.

Getting Help from RACS

RACS is entirely independent of the Department of Home Affairs. All assistance is free.

If you would like advice or assistance, RACS offers the following service options:

| Service | Day | Time | Address/Number |
|-------------------------|------------------|-------------------------------|--|
| Telephone Advice | Monday to Friday | 10AM to 1PM and 2PM to 4PM | (02) 8355 7227 or admin@racs.org.au |

Please note: This fact sheet contains general information only. It does not constitute legal or migration advice. RACS is independent of the Department of Home Affairs. All assistance is free. This factsheet was prepared on 20 August 2021.

Hello/Dear [insert MP name]

I am writing to you as a concerned member of your constituency because I believe Australia must take action to alleviate the suffering of people from Afghanistan, given the escalating crisis the country now faces.

Australia can and must take the following actions.

1. Committing to an additional humanitarian intake of at least 20,000 prioritising the most vulnerable persecuted Afghans, identified above, similar to Canada's announcement on 14 August 2021 accepting 20,000 Afghan refugees, and similar to Australia's response to the Syrian conflict in 2015 in accepting 12,000 vulnerable Syrian refugees.
2. Expediting the resettlement of Afghan interpreters, guides and other personnel involved in Australia's mission in Afghanistan.
3. Granting permanent protection to more than 5,100 Afghan refugees, predominantly from the historically persecuted Hazara ethnic groups, who are currently on temporary protection visas in Australia.
4. Granting amnesty to all Afghan nationals currently in Australia who fear returning to Afghanistan.
5. Prioritising the family reunification visas of Afghan-Australians, including those who are prevented from reuniting with their families due to a government ministerial directive that requires the Department of Home Affairs deprioritise family reunion of hundreds of Afghans in Australia.
6. Lifting the ban on resettlement of refugees to Australia through the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees in Indonesia, a ban which has been in place since 2014. This ban continues to limit resettlement options for 10,000 Afghan refugees awaiting safety and protection. Offer a one-off humanitarian intake of the most vulnerable people in Afghanistan, in addition to the current intake.

This situation demands your urgent attention. Please consider the 6 actions and do everything you can to protect the people from Afghanistan at this time.

[Insert your name]