

Christians United for Afghanistan

Media Release

8 September 2021

Church Leaders meet with Minister Hawke to discuss Afghanistan Crisis

Church leaders in the electorate of Mitchell met with their local member and Minister for Immigration, Citizenship, Migrant Services and Multicultural Affairs, Alex Hawke today under the banner of the *Christians United for Afghanistan* campaign, to discuss the government's response to the Afghanistan crisis.

Fifteen church leaders including representatives from the Anglican Church, Baptists, Catholics, the Uniting Church and Pentecostals, spent a significant amount of time with Minister Hawke, expressing their desire as church leaders to work with the government in ensuring Australia's response to this crisis is compassionate and generous.

The group also thanked Mr Hawke, his team and Department for their significant efforts during the evacuation from Kabul.

They raised with Mr Hawke the four main asks of the campaign including:

1. **Welcome Afghan refugees** – Declare an intake of an additional 20,000 refugees focused on those most at risk from the Taliban.
2. **Protect Afghans already in Australia.** Grant permanent protection to all people from Afghanistan in Australia on temporary protection visas or currently awaiting application outcomes.
3. **Reunite refugee families** - Make immediate arrangements to bring the families of refugees from Afghanistan to Australia.
4. **Support through humanitarian aid** – Provide additional emergency and long-term support through reputable NGOs and organisations working in the region.

The leaders also conveyed the significant unity from the Australian Church on the issue, noting all mainline church denominations which collectively represent thousands of Australians Christians, have signed on to support these asks.

To date, over 12k individuals and over 200 churches have signed on to *Christians United for Afghanistan*. The group also mentioned the importance of the [Afghan Australian Advocacy Network](#) petition, which has 150k signatures and the *Christians United for Afghanistan campaign* is aligning closely with.

The leaders were also keen to express that many Churches are beginning to talk seriously about wanting to assist with settlement of Afghan Refugees once they are in Australia.

Mr Hawke conveyed the extensive work carried out by the government during the evacuation phase in Kabul, including the dedication of the ADF, DFAT and Home Affairs to get people out safely. In total, Australian forces were able to evacuate around 4135 people.

He cited the significant collaboration across the Australian government and the efforts of defence forces on the ground.

Mr Hawke indicated there would be more announcements regarding Australia's continued efforts to support the people of Afghanistan in the coming weeks, as the government turns from the evacuation phase to the resettlement phase.

He reiterated the Prime Minister's words that the intake of 3000 Afghan refugees was a 'starting point and not a ceiling'.

Mr Hawke also listened to the group raise concerns over current arrangements with temporary protection visas and the importance of reuniting Afghan families.

Mr Hawke spoke to the leaders about continuing to engage the whole of the Australian community on this important issue and the resettlement process, believing Australia's response to this crisis can show the best of who we are as a nation and help to continue positive conversations around the value of Australia's humanitarian program.

He also mentioned the importance that churches and faith groups play in providing support to the Afghan community here in Australia, as the situation continues to evolve in Afghanistan over the coming months.

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