



Asian Studies Association of Australia

Wednesday, 25 August 2021

The Hon Minister Marise Payne
The Hon Minister Peter Dutton
The Hon Minister Alex Hawke

Dear Ministers

As academics from across Australia who engage in important research in and about Asia and who have worked closely with colleagues and young people from Afghanistan, we are deeply concerned about the tragedy unfolding with the Taliban's usurping of power in Afghanistan following the withdrawal of allied forces. As advocates for the academic community and the importance of government support for Asian Studies research and education in Australia, we stand for concerted and meaningful action on this unfolding crisis.

We support the right of all people to live in peace and access knowledge and learning. The Taliban have a history of violence and human rights violations that will threaten this access. As an academic association, we hope the Australian government will take particular note of the dangers faced by Afghan academics, teachers, students and alumni from Australian institutions. Australian universities have thousands of alumni and students from an Afghan background.

A number of universities have extended extra support for Afghan-background students including the University of South Australia, University of Melbourne, Monash University and Deakin University. Australian universities have thousands of alumni and students from an Afghan background. We urge the government to recognise the dangers of returning home and ensure that current Afghan students are supported and offered the option of remaining in Australia after they complete their studies.

The Australian government has been a supporter of Afghans receiving higher education in Australia through the Australian Development Scholarships (ADS) and Australia Leadership Award (ALA) initiatives, and a number have returned to the country, holding posts in government and higher education prior to now. Several of these alumni have expressed concern for their future and have a genuine fear of being targeted by members of the Taliban. We ask the government to provide assistance and humanitarian visas to those alumni who wish to leave who wish to leave, along with their families. Furthermore, alumni who have studied in Australia on Australian Development Scholarships and Australian Leadership Awards commit to returning to their home countries as part



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of their scholarship conditions, but we urge the government to waive this requirement for alumni affected if they wish to return to Australia.

We understand that the government has already taken steps in response to this situation. Minister Hawke has announced that no Afghan asylum seekers will be returned to Afghanistan for the time being. In addition to our points raised above, we endorse concrete actions for all Afghans at risk, including raising the number of humanitarian entrants from Afghanistan, fast-tracking family reunion visas for family members for those Afghans who already have permanent residency or citizenship, processing current Temporary Protection Visa and SHEV visa holders to permanent visa status.

Australia has had a significant role in the Afghanistan conflict over the last 20 years and believe that we have a responsibility to do all that we can as a nation to support Afghans who are at risk of reprisal from the Taliban.

Associate Professor Kate McGregor,
President of the Asian Studies Association of Australia