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CAPSA urges more compassion in Afghanistan resettlement response

The Federal Government's announcement of at least 15,000 places over four years for people fleeing the crisis in Afghanistan, through existing Humanitarian and Family Visa programs, is an inadequate response, says the Catholic Alliance for People Seeking Asylum (CAPSA), reiterating its call for allocation of at least 20,000 additional places.

"This announcement by the Federal Government disguises the fact that these 15,000 people will be included within Australia's existing annual humanitarian intake of 13,750. This is a drop in the ocean compared to what is needed to make a tangible difference to the lives of those fleeing Afghanistan in search of safety. In times of crisis, it is paramount that our political leaders express the type of compassion supported by millions of Australians, and this announcement fails to do that," says Jesuit Social Services Acting CEO Sally Parnell.

CAPSA, co-convened by Jesuit Social Services and Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS) Australia, supports individuals, schools, parishes and Catholic organisations across education, health, refugee and social services in their advocacy for fair and humane treatment for people seeking asylum in Australia.

Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS) Australia Country Director Tamara Domicelj says that the Catholic community in Australia including schools, health, refugee and social services organisations, stand willing and ready to help settle and support displaced people from Afghanistan.

"The ongoing crisis in Afghanistan requires urgent and accelerated action to protect and safeguard people at particular threat including ethnic and religious minorities as well as women and girls. CAPSA, and by extension the broader Catholic community, urges our political leaders to exercise greater leadership and compassion and to significantly scale up our efforts to help, including providing people in Afghanistan who are already in Australia with pathways to permanency and the opportunity to reunite with their families. Through our advisory group and broader networks, we are ready to help people settle in Australia and to access the services and supports they need. We call upon our Government to play a greater role in the global response, as people's lives literally depend on it," she says.

CAPSA supports the recommendation from the interim report into the Inquiry into Australia's Engagement in Afghanistan, released last week, for the Australian Government to reconsider permanent protection pathways for refugees and people seeking asylum from Afghanistan currently in Australia, and prioritise family reunification.

"The Australian Government has an opportunity to demonstrate true leadership by providing safety and security to those people already in Australia as a priority, and supporting their families, in addition to the urgent humanitarian response needed to support those fleeing the current crisis in Afghanistan. It is imperative that Australia extends the compassion needed at this time," says Ms Parnell.

CAPSA continues to stand alongside other members of the Catholic community and the Afghanistan diaspora to call for an additional intake of 20,000 resettlement places for people from Afghanistan, permanent protection for refugees on temporary visas in Australia and the enabling and expediting of family reunion pathways for families of people from Afghanistan already in Australia.

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