



19<sup>th</sup> August, 2021

Senator, the Hon. S Henderson,  
P.O. Box 821  
Geelong VIC 3220

**Re: Protection for Afghan people seeking asylum and refugees on temporary visas in Australia.**

Dear Senator Henderson,

As the situation in Afghanistan deteriorates drastically, Saint Ignatius College, Geelong, stands in solidarity with members of Australia's Afghan diaspora, including thousands of refugees, people seeking asylum, and their families, who are experiencing significant pain and uncertainty.

Saint Ignatius College welcomes the Australian Government's ongoing efforts to evacuate locally engaged employees (LEE) and assist humanitarian visa holders currently in Afghanistan. We also acknowledge reports that the Government is considering prioritising refugees from Afghanistan in the 2021-2022 annual humanitarian intake, and we support calls for a scaled-up allocation of places.

We also acknowledge positive developments with regards to a moratorium on returns of visa holders to Afghanistan, and indicative support for Afghan refugees on temporary visa holders in Australia, but await concrete details.

We strongly believe that the Australian Government should take additional measures to ensure the safety and reduce the anguish of people from Afghanistan in need of urgent protection. We, the undersigned, call on the Australian Government to take the following immediate actions in this regard:

1. Introduce a substantive intake of refugees and forcibly displaced people from Afghanistan, in addition to Australia's annual humanitarian program, noting Canada's recent commitment to take 20,000 refugees.
2. Grant permanent protection to refugees from Afghanistan who are currently in Australia on temporary visas.
3. Provide people seeking asylum from Afghanistan who are currently in Australia with fair and consistent pathways to seek permanent protection, including by permitting people whose claims have been rejected to submit new applications for protection.
4. Enable priority access to family reunion to refugees from Afghanistan in Australia.

We hope and pray for peace, security and mutual respect, but until then we must do all that we can to protect the lives of our sisters and brothers from Afghanistan.

*Competence*

*Conscience*

*Compassion*

*A Jesuit Companion School*