



Natalie Ward
Minister for Sport, Multiculturalism, Seniors and Veterans

MEDIA RELEASE

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AFGHAN LEADERS UPDATED ON NSW RESPONSE TO CRISIS

In response to the evolving humanitarian crisis in Afghanistan, the NSW Government has held a forum with Afghan Australian leaders to show its support and provide an update on measures to help the community at this difficult time.

Minister for Multiculturalism Natalie Ward said the NSW Government stood in solidarity with the Afghan community in NSW and was advocating on its behalf.

“This is an incredibly distressing time for Afghan Australians. I have been absolutely inundated with inquiries from the Afghan community seeking advice on how to bring their family members to Australia,” Mrs Ward said.

“This is the second forum we have convened with Afghan leaders in a matter of weeks. NSW has always shown it has a big heart when it comes to supporting communities fleeing war and persecution.”

The forum was attended by Afghan Australian community leaders, peak multicultural bodies and settlement groups.

It followed a meeting earlier this week between Multiculturalism Ministers across Australia to discuss a combined response to support the resettlement of Afghan nationals.

The Ministers committed to work together to support coordinated and effective settlement arrangements including access to legal advice, mental health services and timely visa processes.

“Those coming here from Afghanistan have been through an incredibly stressful and distressing time and it’s important they know they are welcome and will be looked after,” Mrs Ward said.

The NSW Government recently announced a \$6.25 million funding package to support vulnerable temporary visa holders, particularly asylum seekers, who need urgent help during the current COVID outbreak.

In June, the NSW Government launched its innovative three-year ‘NSW Growing Regions of Welcome Pilot Program’ to address critical workforce needs, and link refugees and migrants in metropolitan Sydney with employment and lifestyle opportunities in regional areas.

NSW Coordinator General for Settlement Peter Shergold AC said Afghan arrivals would be supported as they began a new life in NSW.

“We stand ready to make sure they get the best start in NSW with our world class healthcare and education system, and tailored services including housing, English language support and specialist counselling through the Humanitarian Support Program,” Professor Shergold said.

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