

## The BallinaByron Declaration

### **Background**

*Ballina Region for Refugees (BR4R) has been supporting refugees and asylum seekers since 2016, through friendship, financial assistance, advocacy and awareness raising.*

*Our supporters come from across the Ballina and Byron Shires, and we have links with similar groups throughout the Northern Rivers. We also have close working relationships with many groups across Australia including the Asylum Seekers Resources Centre (ASRC), Manus Lives Matter, Dawn Barrington (WA based advocate), Rural Australians for Refugees (RAR) and Brisbane Onshore Arrivals Group.*

*The tragic events associated with the Taliban takeover of Afghanistan have led us to sponsor two Afghan families to obtain Australian visas. One family, still in Afghanistan, is in grave danger from the Taliban. We are also supporting locally based film Director, Benjamin Gilmour, who is seeking assistance to complete visa applications for a further 50 musicians, actors and film crew still in Afghanistan.*

### **Declaration**

**A**s members of the Ballina Byron communities (Refugee Welcome Zones) and the Northern Rivers Region, we call for Australia to show compassion and generosity towards our brothers and sisters in Afghanistan. Right now, many Afghan people are living in fear of torture and death.

This humanitarian disaster is affecting many people, especially ethnic or religious minorities, those who are advocates for women's rights, those who assisted the Australian intervention in Afghanistan and those involved in the arts and journalism. We know that people are being threatened, intimidated and assaulted. We dread the impending likelihood of systematic torture and murder.

We consider that Australia has a moral obligation to assist. Australians fought and died in Afghanistan for twenty years and we must honor this sacrifice by offering assistance to people who are now at great risk.

We have a proud history of helping in times of crisis. Australia accepted 70,000 Vietnamese refugees when that war ended, 42,000 Chinese refugees after the Tiananmen Square massacre, and 12,000 Syrian refugees during their civil war.

In August, Australia evacuated about 4,000 Afghan people who had links to Australia. However, more, much more, needs to be done.

**We call on the Australian Government to provide a minimum of 20,000 humanitarian visas to Afghans as a matter of urgency.**

**The time to act is now. We must not turn our backs on Afghanistan.**

If you would like to support the BallinaByron Declaration, please send us an email with your name and your town:

[BallinaByronDeclaration@br4r.org.au](mailto:BallinaByronDeclaration@br4r.org.au)

When we have 1000 names, we will forward this declaration and those names to the Australian government.