



MEDIA RELEASE

June 1, 2021
For immediate release

RSL Urges Fast-tracking of Visas for Afghan Support Staff

The Returned & Services League of Australia (RSL) has called on the Federal Government to fast-track Australian visa support for Afghan support staff who have assisted Australian Defence forces and officials during the deployment in Afghanistan.

RSL National President Major General Greg Melick has urged the Federal Government, through the Department of Home Affairs, to rapidly process visa applications for the safe relocation to Australia of interpreters and locally employed staff who provided assistance to Australian military forces and Embassy officials in Afghanistan.

General Melick said his request to the Government was based on the likelihood of Taliban reprisals, following the news of the closure of the Australian Embassy in Kabul last week and the imminent withdrawal of Coalition Forces.

“These people have provided invaluable service to Australians posted to Afghanistan and we have an obligation to help them,” he said.

“The RSL particularly notes that reprisals are likely on Afghan locals who assisted Australian forces and officials, with Taliban threats already emerging to such personnel who worked with Coalition forces.

“Safe passage to Australia is the right thing to do for those who have directly assisted Australians.”

General Melick highlighted the ‘humanitarian assistance scheme’ with Department of Home Affairs staff asked to make contact with known support staff, such as interpreters, and to offer all available assistance to fast-track those procedures.

“The United States has been quick to offer assistance to Afghanistan locals wanting to be relocated if they have worked for the Coalition forces, with unconfirmed reports of thousands of Afghans already identified for relocation to the US. Australia needs to do its part as well,” he said.

ENDS

National Media contact: Tony Harrison – 0417 318 178; tony@wearebright.com.au