

Media Release

The Hon Ros Spence MP
Minister for Multicultural Affairs
Minister for Community Sport
Minister for Youth



Tuesday, 9 November 2021

URGENT LEGAL SUPPORT FOR AFGHAN COMMUNITIES

Refugees in Victoria will be offered free legal assistance through an Andrews Labor Government funding boost that will support 1,500 people, including new arrivals and their families affected by the Afghan humanitarian crisis.

Almost \$1 million will go to independent community legal centre Refugee Legal – to work with pro bono lawyers from major firms and local multicultural communities – and resource an Afghanistan Legal Hotline and Legal Clinic.

The investment will deliver extra administration, paralegal and legal resources to help meet increased demand for legal services and advice from new Afghan arrivals and established Afghan communities.

The Hotline and Legal Clinic continue to provide advice for people in Victoria on bringing family members from Afghanistan (or third countries) to Australia, and for Afghans in Victoria who are on temporary visas or who have been refused refugee protection and are seeking reassessment of their protections claims.

Established in 1998, Refugee Legal provides not-for-profit expert legal advice and casework service via telephone and group information sessions for asylum seekers, refugees and disadvantaged migrants in the community and in immigration detention in Victoria and Australia.

Refugee Legal has previously delivered community information sessions and recruited, supervised and coordinated over 550 pro-bono legal practitioners to consult with over 14,000 clients.

The initiative is part of the almost \$2.4 million the Labor Government has announced this year to support the work of Refugee Legal.

The *Victorian Budget 2021/22* contains \$8.8 million for essential programs that streamline settlement for humanitarian arrivals and support migrant communities.

People impacted by the Afghanistan crisis and needing legal assistance can call Refugee Legal on (03) 9413 0166, from 9:00am to 5:00pm on Monday to Friday. Further information is available at refugeelegal.org.au.

Quotes attributable to Minister for Multicultural Affairs Ros Spence

"Many Afghan Victorians continue to feel the effects of the terrible events unfolding in Afghanistan. This funding delivers more legal help for people dealing with the fallout of the situation there."

"I commend Refugee Legal for their tireless support for some of the most vulnerable members of our community."

Quote attributable to Refugee Legal Executive Director and Principal Solicitor David Manne

"Legal assistance is crucial to supporting refugees and migrants, especially during times of crisis. Victorian Government funding has made a major contribution to ensuring people receive the help they critically need."