

Rights Advocacy Project Media Release

“22-years on, anniversary of Temporary Protection marked by ongoing humanitarian crisis in Afghanistan”

20th October 2021

Today, October 20th, 2021 marks 22 years since the introduction of Temporary Protection Visas (TPVs) in Australia - a system which perpetuates uncertainty for people seeking asylum by preventing them from gaining permanent protection and safety within the country.

For Afghan refugees, who make up roughly one quarter of refugees on TPVs, the escalating humanitarian crisis has made the possibility of returning to Afghanistan even more remote. However, the Morrison government has refused to grant permanent protection.

In light of today's sombre anniversary, Liberty Victoria's Rights Advocacy Project is renewing calls for the **Morrison Government to immediately grant all Afghan refugees currently on temporary visas with permanent protection to remain in Australia.**

TPVs were first introduced by the Howard Government on 13 October 1999. While abolished by the Rudd Government in 2008, the Abbott Government reintroduced TPVs in 2014. The new TPV regime affected people seeking asylum who arrived by sea without a prior valid visa allowing them to remain in Australia for three years, but under strict conditions.

Our recent report '[Bridging the Department's Visa Blindspot](#),' found that this TPV regime and the accompanying exercise of ministerial powers has created unsustainable, dangerous and unlivable conditions for those seeking asylum in Australia.

TPVs do not provide any pathway to permanent residency and visa holders undergo a reassessment of their protection every 3 to 5 years, and indefinitely. Refugees on temporary visas live a life in limbo, their legal status which is subject to change affects their ability to hold stable employment and access other basic support services.

The uncertainty is harmful for this already vulnerable population, refugees need permanent protection not indefinite uncertainty to get on with their lives in Australia.

As the Taliban secure their rule over the country, the situation in Afghanistan has become extremely fluid. Even recent assessments are unable to provide an accurate picture of the situation beyond 2021.

Expanding our humanitarian intake by offering displaced people protection and the opportunity for resettlement in Australia is a critical part of the Morrison government's response. But we also need to be guaranteeing safety and stability for Afghans who are a

Liberty Victoria's

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part of our community during this terrible and sensitive time, with many having family members overseas.

Granting permanent protection in Australia to Afghans already on our shores is not only practical - it is common sense.