



# Julian Hill MP

## FEDERAL MEMBER FOR BRUCE



Mr Grant Hehir  
Auditor-General  
Australian National Audit Office  
GPO Box 707  
CANBERRA ACT 2601

Dear Mr Hehir

Thank you for your letter of 20 August 2021 in response to my correspondence regarding the processing of partner visas by the Department of Home Affairs. I appreciate your consideration of this matter, and your view that there is merit in a performance audit of the administration of this program. I do encourage your urgent examination of this program.

You advise that the Department of Home Affairs has indicated that a decrease in the number of applications for partner visas has created an opportunity for the existing backlog to be remediated. With respect, the process of reuniting Australians with their families in a timely manner should rely on something more than a serendipitous reduction in paperwork.

Despite the Department's advice to you, their website shows a further deterioration in the standard processing timeframe for partner visas since my letter of 23 July 2021. The 75<sup>th</sup> and 90<sup>th</sup> percentile processing of subclass 820 visas is now 24-31 months; subclass 309 visas now 18-26 months; and subclass 300 visas, 24-28 months.

The backlog itself owes much to the sharp reduction in partner visas granted from 2017-18 to 2019-20; 8,000 fewer than in each of the four previous years, coupled with apparent illegality as the 'planning level' clearly operates as a de-facto cap. The pandemic-induced panic saw an increased partner visa planning level in 2020-21.

Further, and of enormous import to tens of thousands of Australians, the sudden rush to grant partner visas shows enormous discrimination in processing. In 2021, if your husband or wife is from Afghanistan, it takes 43 months on average to get a 309 visa; if they are from the USA, it's 7 months.

The devastating impact of this maladministration is now playing out in Kabul, where the partners and children of hundreds or thousands of Australians are risking their lives seeking evacuation, fleeing insurgent forces and possible terrorist attacks. They should have been safe in Australia years ago, save for this government whose tardiness is matched only by their malice.

The consequences are now clear. The community tells me that Australians and their loved ones will pay with their lives. I hope it isn't too late to save the many thousands of Afghans with close ties to Australia. An examination of this program is increasingly urgent.

Yours sincerely

Julian Hill MP  
Federal Member for Bruce  
27-8-21

45 Robinson Street Dandenong VIC 3175 PO Box 7427 Dandenong VIC 3175

(03) 9791 7770 julian.hill.mp@aph.gov.au JulianHillMP julianhillmp julianhillmp.com