



## **MEDIA RELEASE**

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### **Rural Australians for Refugees says end offshore detention, offer more Afghan refugees visas**

“Australia’s inhumane treatment of the people who are refugees must stop - let’s end offshore detention, and all refugees on temporary visas must be granted permanent visas without delay”, Dr Jonathan Strauss, the new President of Rural Australians for Refugees, said as RAR’s 2022 conference began last night.

“Regional Australians have gathered here in Katoomba because there is still so much work to do to win the compassion and rights refugees deserve.”

Dr Strauss, who lives in Cairns, has joined activists from the 70 RAR member groups and their supporters at the conference. He said “the refugees who have joined with us here have raised their voice for a permanent change to how refugees are viewed in this country. We agree.”

“Refugees should be welcomed. They are and will be a valuable part of our communities.”

“All refugees should have access to tertiary education, which is denied to many of them, right now.”

“There are also 14,000 refugees in Indonesia who have wanted to come here for up to a decade. For now, they can’t even apply for this under the humanitarian program.”

Dr Strauss said “speakers such Craig Foster and Angela Fredericks are driving home that people can come together to turn Australia to compassion. Already there is popular support for Afghan refugees, but they need more visas and they need to be issued now.”

“In Australia, we also need to end refugee detention. Today, refugees have been held in detention centres for an average of more than two years. A number of refugees have been in these places for a decade or more.”

“The current refugee policy has the major parties and the much of the media stitched up and without answers”, Dr Strauss said. “People here are calling for a Royal Commission into immigration detention, because that’s the only way to break through the shroud of secrecy imposed by the contracts for private companies to run the camps and to protect the refugees who want to speak out”

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