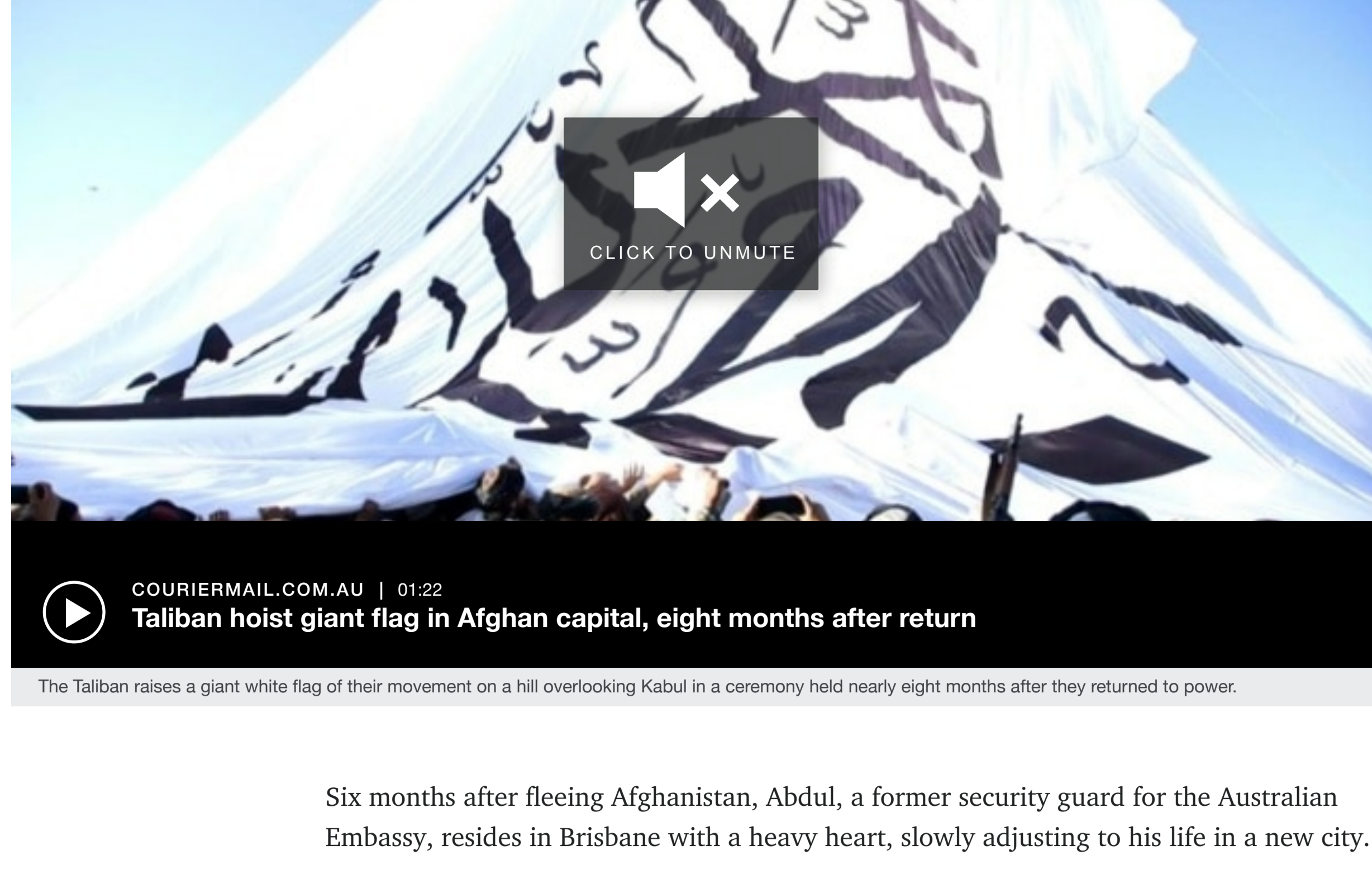


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Afghan refugee fighting to get wife, kids to safety after Taliban takes Kabul

A former Australian Embassy security guard who was separated from his family while fleeing Taliban rule is desperately trying to get them to safety in Queensland.

Zathia Bazeer
3 min read April 25, 2022 - 4:07PM **Courier Mail**



The Taliban raises a giant white flag of their movement on a hill overlooking Kabul in a ceremony held nearly eight months after they returned to power.

Six months after fleeing Afghanistan, Abdul, a former security guard for the Australian Embassy, resides in Brisbane with a heavy heart, slowly adjusting to his life in a new city.

His pregnant wife and six kids, the youngest being two years old, are currently stuck in Afghanistan.

When Kabul fell and thousands of Afghan civilians were desperately trying to escape the Taliban rule, Abdul, who does not want his last name printed for security reasons, got separated from his loved ones amongst chaos and crowds of people at the airport.

"I came alone, my family ... my wife and children were left (behind) in Afghanistan," said Abdul, who came to Queensland on August 15 last year.



Abdul has not seen his family in six months. Picture: Steve Pohlner

"I was working with the Australian Government ... they asked me to show my proof of papers to the Australian military, and they accepted that they helped me move from Afghanistan and brought me to Australia," he said.

He lived with his family in a small village north of Afghanistan when he received a call from a friend saying people who have worked with Australian and foreign organisations can leave the country.

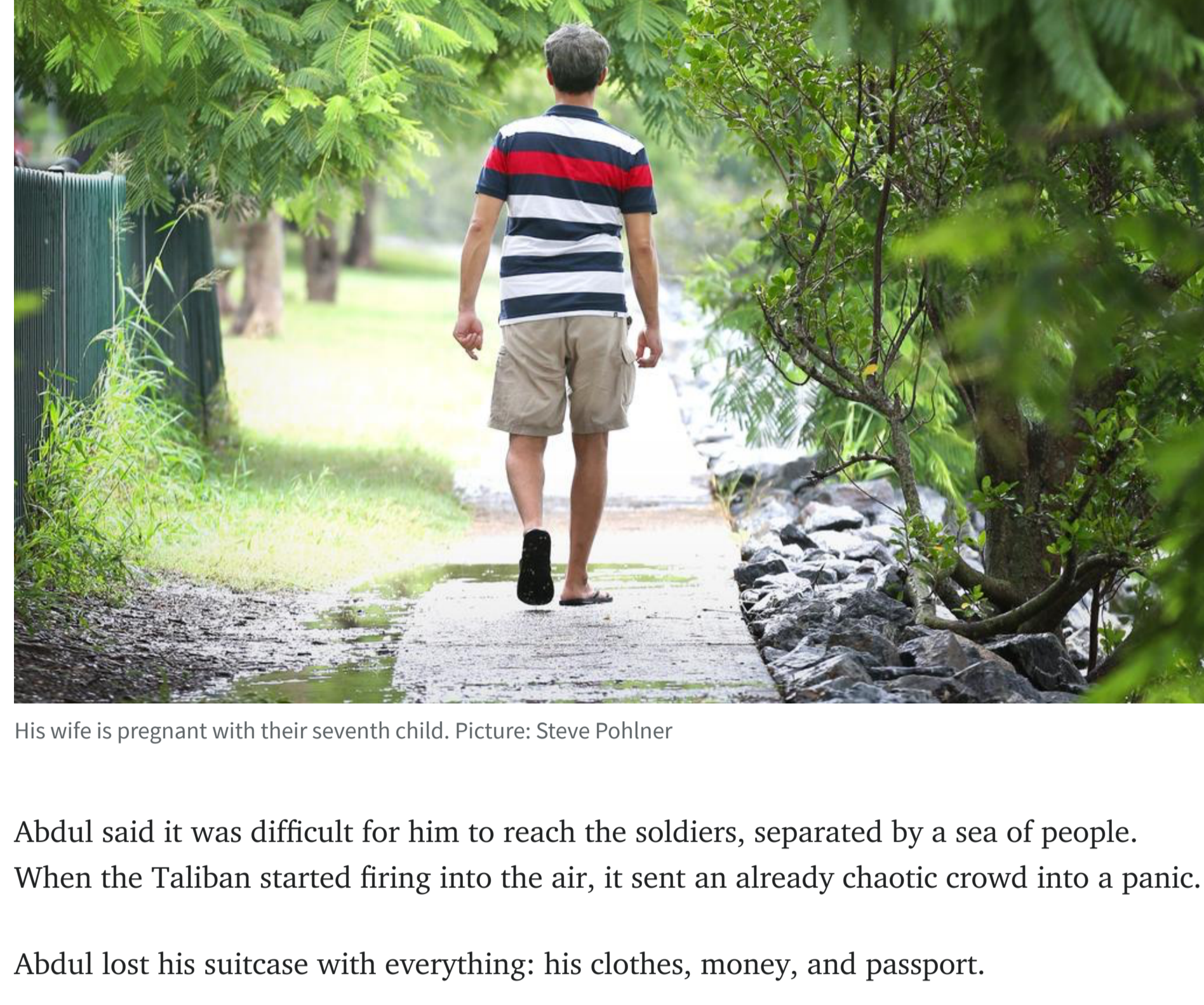
He made his way to Kabul by himself to figure out how to reach the Australian soldiers and the safest route for his family to come to the airport.

Abdul described how uncontrollable crowds had gathered at the airport and were screaming. Parents were trying to lift their kids over the wall in hopes of saving them.

At the same time, Taliban guards were right outside the airport and at every checkpoint trying to control the crowd by taking violent measures.

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"It was so dangerous, and there was so much tension and fear. The Taliban were beating people and didn't let any (civilians) trying to reach the airport in," he said.



His wife is pregnant with their seventh child. Picture: Steve Pohlner

Abdul said it was difficult for him to reach the soldiers, separated by a sea of people. When the Taliban started firing into the air, it sent an already chaotic crowd into a panic.

Abdul lost his suitcase with everything: his clothes, money, and passport.

"When the Taliban were firing, people started running, and they didn't care about anyone in their way. People were getting trampled, people jumping over people, and I saved my documents ... I held it against my chest," he said.

"One Taliban member kicked my back asking me where I'm going.

"I told them I worked with the Australian Government and that I wanted to go there with them. They started using bad words and cursing people out."

After he reached the soldiers, he told them his family would come soon and his wife would need a translator because she didn't speak English.

The soldiers said once his family arrived and showed documents, they could be let through, but there was no way for Abdul to wait for his family to arrive. He was rushed onto the next flight.

Once he arrived in Dubai, he called his wife and told them to make their way to the airport.

It took his family over a day to arrive at Kabul Airport, and it wasn't easy due to travelling with six kids.



Crowds of people wait outside the airport in Kabul, Afghanistan. Picture: Twitter/DAVID_MARTINON via REUTERS

When they finally arrived, guns were fired in the air again which sent people into chaos.

His wife's bag got lost in the crowd, which contained their documents, passport, identification cards and money.

"I rang her, but her mobile was off, and this made me (anxious)," he said.

"I thought 'why would she turn her phone off? I kept trying to call,' and she didn't pick up."

Once he managed to reach her, his wife described how the situation at the airport was worsening and she "lost everything".

Abdul said his wife and kids are now staying with his relatives in Kabul because it was the safest option until he could attempt to bring them to Australia.

Both he and his family are struggling to comprehend the uncertainty of their future.

Abdul hopes that he can get the help he needs to be reunited with them.

"I felt sad because I was alone and my family was left behind," he said.

"Now I've been separated from them for six months, but it feels like six years."

"Especially my younger kids she rang me saying, 'father where are you ... I'm very sad ... Why didn't you come back to the house?'"

"I told her 'my daughter, my sweetheart, just waiting, I'm coming... I'm at work just wait,'" he said.

Aaron Sadat, President of Queensland Afghan Community Association, says that fifty per cent of the refugees will be given permanent visas in November this year, and the other half will be granted visas next year.

"There has also been inconsistent communication with the department. They're not sure what's happening next if they don't get the visa this year," he said.

"Abdul is on a temporary visa and can't start bringing his family over until he gets a permanent visa."



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