



**Media Release 7 July 2022**

## **Bringing together powerful and diverse Afghan voices, Twenty Years: The War in Afghanistan questions the real legacy of war and the future of Afghanistan.**

***Twenty Years: The War in Afghanistan***, a new exhibition coming to The Leo Kelly Blacktown Arts Centre in August, brings together powerful and diverse Afghan voices to assess the legacy of the post 9/11, US-led war in Afghanistan and the return of the Taliban.

The exhibition will be presented at Blacktown Arts with Diversity Arts Australia as a partner, running from the 2 August – 3 September 2022, with a public program featuring panel discussions, Afghan tea and a film screening, all exploring Afghan culture, the conflict in Afghanistan and Australia's responsibility in its future.

The exhibition features work by internationally renowned Afghan-Australian artists, **Khadim Ali** and new work from **Elyas Alavi**; London-based Afghan artist, **Orna Kazimi**, exhibits a striking animation and free-zine; Afghan photo-journalist, **Najiba Noori**, shares a series of images capturing the complex ebbs and flows of life, death and migration in recent years; Melbourne-based street-artist **Tia Kasambalis** presents a series of portraits of people connected to the Afghan War both in Australia and Afghanistan; journalist, **Antony Loewenstein**, shares behind the scenes clips from his documentary and journalistic work as well as photos from his visits to Afghanistan; and finally, a specially commissioned short film commenting on the legacy of the war has been made by two, anonymous female Afghan-Australian artists.

Bringing together powerful and diverse Afghan voices from the arts, advocacy and academia, the public program, curated by Maryam Zahid of *Afghan Women on the Move*, asks key questions:

“We need to challenge the misconception of multicultural and refugee women in contemporary societies. An exhibition like *Twenty Years: The War in Afghanistan* highlights the profound ethical, moral and political challenges when invading a country like Afghanistan and the responsibility that we should all feel. Who's facing the consequences when the war fails?”

“Diversity Arts is proud to be supporting this groundbreaking project, **Twenty Years**. This brilliant showcase expresses the breadth of leading Afghan artists and thinkers. We're looking forward to amplifying the critical conversations and artistry, so they reach the audiences they deserve. Congratulations to the artists for their invaluable work and activism,” said Lena Nahlous, CEO and Executive Producer, Diversity Arts Australia.

“How artists respond to conflict is something many in the West don't understand, don't see, and don't think much about,” says Sydney-based journalist, author and filmmaker, Antony Loewenstein, coordinator of the *Twenty Years* project.

“Afghan voices aren’t heard, and when they are, it’s in the context of a disaster. This is an attempt to give the public a new perspective. A key aim of *Twenty Years* is to show the general public that Afghans aren’t just victims but writers, thinkers and artists.”

To reach national and international audiences, Diversity Arts Australia is presenting an online event on 24 August, 6.30-8.30pm, featuring a selection of the project artists alongside Afghan-Australian advocate [Diana Sayed](#), Australian whistle-blower [David McBride](#) who exposed war crimes in Afghanistan and refugee rights advocate and human rights lawyer [Sayed Rahmatullah Hussainizada](#), founder of *Afghan Women on the Move* [Maryam Zahid](#), artist [Elyas Alavi](#) and others.

**Key details:**

**Exhibition:** Tuesday 2 August – Saturday 3 September 2022.

The Leo Kelly Blacktown Arts Centre, 78 Flushcombe Road, Blacktown NSW 2148

Presented by Blacktown Arts and Diversity Arts Australia

**Media interviews and photo/video ops at Blacktown Arts:** 2, 3 and 4 August by appointment only.

**Public program of free events, with Afghan tea:**

Thursday 11 August, 6:30 pm - 8:00 pm

Panel discussion: Legacy of the War

Saturday 13 August, 2:00 pm – 4:00 pm

Film screening and conversation: *The Afghan Cameleers in Australia* – A film celebrating Afghan culture

Saturday 3 September, 2:00 pm – 4:00 pm

Panel discussion: Future: possibilities and responsibilities

24 August, 6.30 pm – 8.00 pm

Panel discussion (online event) - A year after *Twenty Years*

Presented by Diversity Arts

