



18 June 2019

Media release

Inquiry statement on withdrawal of Afghan villagers as core participants

The Inquiry remains confident that it will get to the truth of the matters under scrutiny despite the withdrawal of the Afghan villagers as core participants.

The withdrawal comes just two weeks after the Inquiry, in response to previous concerns of counsel for the villagers, had proposed (in [Minute No 16](#)) a process whereby it would travel to Afghanistan to hear evidence directly from the villagers.

The Inquiry stands by the processes it has adopted.

It has carefully struck a balance between safeguarding classified information and the identity of all witnesses while meeting the principles of natural justice and open justice.

While the withdrawal of the Afghan villagers so late in the piece is disappointing, it does not significantly impact the Inquiry's work as the Inquiry has a wide range of information and sources available to it. This includes the authors of *Hit & Run* who obtained much of their information from the villagers, and the affidavits of three villagers filed in earlier court proceedings.

ENDS