

6 December 2021

140 Commonwealth
Avenue
Canberra ACT 2603
Australia

Senate Legal and Constitutional Affairs Legislation Committee
PO Box 6100
Senate
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

Dear Committee,

I write in reference to the Government's Migration Amendment (Strengthening the Character Test) Bill 2021 referred to you on 25 November.

As you will be aware, New Zealand has expressed serious concerns about previous versions of this bill, including through a written submission dated 28 November 2018 and through an appearance before the committee on 19 August 2019.

Those submissions referred to the corrosive effect that Australia's existing visa cancellation and deportation policies have had on the New Zealand – Australia bilateral relationship. They also emphasised New Zealand's concern that the proposed bill would make a bad situation worse for New Zealanders in Australia.

The 2021 version of this bill appears very similar to the 2018 and 2019 versions New Zealand has already provided formal submissions on. We are still analysing the differences between the 2019 and 2021 versions of this bill, but our initial impression is that they do not address New Zealand's concerns in any meaningful way.

I note that a shortened Senate Committee process has been scheduled for this version of the bill. Given the serious impacts this bill could have, including on the hundreds of thousands of New Zealand citizens who live and work in Australia, we believe that a full Committee process that allows for meaningful input from all potentially affected stakeholders would be appropriate.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely,

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Dame Annette King, DNZM
New Zealand High Commissioner to Australia.