

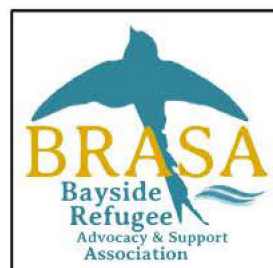
Dear Members of the Senate Committee re Migration Amendment (Strengthening Character Test) Bill 2021.

The Bayside Refugee Advocacy and Support Association is a non-partisan association of 51 people who provide support to refugees, and who are concerned about the harshness of Australia's laws regarding refugees. The members are very apprehensive about the proposed amendment to the Migration Act. We are puzzled as to why it is being proposed. We understand that the Government already has adequate powers to cancel or refuse to issue visas on character grounds. We understand that this state of affairs already receives bi-partisan support.

Our concerns about the bill relate to the following:

1. The reasons given to explain the need for it are unclear
2. There is no provision for review of a decision to deport a person following cancellation of their visa, and in some cases, there is a risk that they will be returned to a country where they will be in danger
3. There is a danger that there will be an increase in the number of persons whose visas are cancelled, and who are held indefinitely in immigration detention because they cannot be sent back to the country they came from.
4. For those with families in Australia, there is the risk that they will be separated from their support and family networks. This will deny many of them their best chance of redeeming themselves following reprehensible conduct, and of re-integrating into society.
5. We are concerned that the trend since 2014 has been for a huge increase in the number of visas denied or cancelled, and that this has particularly impacted refugees.
6. We believe that it is unfair and anomalous that a person who has been punished in a court of law with a punishment at the lower end of the scale for the offence of which he has been convicted can be viewed as if guilty of a more serious version of the same crime, and then further punished with deportation or indefinite detention.
7. We see no plausible argument that this proposed change to the Migration Act will do anything of substance to benefit the Australian community.

We urge the members of the Committee not to recommend this Bill.



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Geraldine Moore