

Submission to the inquiry on the Migration Amendment (Removal and Other Measures) Bill 2024.

My name is _____ and I am writing to you from _____ in the electorate of _____

I am the child of immigrants, having come to Australia as a child and grown up in Australia and ultimately becoming an Australian citizen. I have benefited from, but also contributed to, a good life in Australia.

I wish to express my deep concern about the measures contained in this bill. Specifically, I have concerns about the consequences of these measures and how they could directly impact our community and our way of life due to the resulting power that this bill provides to a single minister. I have direct experience with the migration system and understand the power imbalance that exists between an individual and the government. This is exacerbated even further if you are a person fleeing persecution. I believe that the measures contained within this bill are harsh and disproportionate. Allowing the government to coerce an individual into taking actions against their better judgement is deeply concerning. This combined with the new power to be able to reverse a protection finding may result in people who are genuinely at risk of persecution to be forced into situations that put them at risk. I am deeply concerned what this could mean for the many people who find themselves in these kinds of situations.

The criminalisation of people who find themselves in this situation is cruel and will only lead to further harm. Any prison sentence in relation to these matters is extreme and serves to re-enact Australia's indefinite detention regime that has resulted in suffering for many years. What's worse is that these new measures compound this cruelty by criminalising these people.

The power contained within this bill to allow the immigration minister to ban people from a particular nation from applying for a visa based on their nationality is extreme overreach. This is a measure that will have many unintended consequences and negative repercussions for many Australians who have family in these countries. Care and compassion are values that our community holds in very high regard. For our government to not show the same compassion or understanding is unthinkable.

Rather than banning people from coming to our country, separating families and imposing more cruelty on people in need we should be finding ways to give people the opportunities they need to live a good life.

Rather than forcing people back to countries where their safety is threatened or imprisoning them, our government should be overhauling a system that has imposed systemic cruelty onto those who are seeking safety. Our communities are compassionate and caring, these are core Australian values that have helped us all to create the society that we all benefit from today. We want our government to reflect the compassion of our communities in its policies and approach to those in need. This bill does none of that, instead it takes us backwards and imposes cruelty while expanding government powers in extreme and unnecessary ways.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment.

Sincerely,

Dear Committee Secretary,

Submission to the inquiry on the Migration Amendment (Removal and Other Measures) Bill 2024

I'd like to first acknowledge that I am writing from the lands of the Boon Wurrung People of the Kulin nations, and pay my respects to Elders past and present. I acknowledge that sovereignty was never ceded.

My name is _____ and I am writing to you from _____. I am writing in my capacity as a concerned Australian citizen who migrated from Vietnam. My family – my parents, my uncles and aunties, cousins and many of my community were born and raised during the Vietnam War. Some fled to Australia and all over the world, some stayed and forced to face the persecution, and we as individuals and a whole community experience trauma and intergenerational trauma in our unique ways. My community has taught me everything about what it means to belong to a community that looks after people in need, and to be proud of where I come from. They have also taught me what I know about my responsibility to care for others in hardship, including those fleeing persecution - from war, from famine, from genocide. It is because of the experiences of myself and my family that I am compelled to write to you today.

I am deeply concerned with every aspect of this bill. I believe it should not be passed in any form. The measures contained in this bill are discriminatory, give the Immigration Minister undue extreme powers, and contravene our country's commitment under international humanitarian law to provide safe haven to people seeking asylum.

My main issues and concerns with this bill are:

- Coercion of migrants and refugees

This bill provides the Immigration Minister the power to force people who have sought protection in this country to do whatever is necessary to facilitate their own deportation. This would compound the existing trauma of these individuals, who in my experience as a social worker, already come seeking protection and asylum from this country with traumatic experiences from their home countries, many also experienced horrific trauma during from displacement. To knowingly force such individuals to facilitate their own deportation to places where they may be fearing persecution or significant harm, or risk a prison sentence - is a barbaric and arbitrary application of power.

- Criminalisation

Trying to compel people to return to countries where they risk persecution of death will not be achieved through imprisoning them. I had the privilege to work with people and children in community detention who suffer horrifically from being separated from family, from community and not having access to services and proper care. Indefinite detention did not and has not compelled them to return to countries where they are fleeing persecution and harm, and to know that this bill seeks to put people in prison only re-enacts our cruel detention system.

- Reversal of protection findings

This is a terrifying prospect. To reverse someone's protection status after they have been found to be a refugee owed protection is criminal.

- Imposing a travel ban

This is such an incredible overreach - particularly for many of my clients and friends who have family in countries that fall under this travel ban category. How dare we as a nation proclaim values of multiculturalism, family and compassion - whilst seeking to push through changes like this - that will have unintended consequences and devastating repercussions for families and communities throughout this country.

- Extreme powers that it gives a single minister

Another unnecessary overreach for a single individual to make decisions about what countries are 'removal concern countries'. How are we a democratic country if we are providing a single minister to make decisions autocratically - without a mechanism for consultation with the PM or the Foreign Affairs Minister?

Our government has an opportunity to reverse the harm and trauma that this proposed bill has already caused countless communities. We have the opportunity now to reject this bill in all forms, and strive towards helping people who are fleeing persecution and harm, to live life that they deserve - one of dignity, freedom and hope - as is the right of all humans. Our government can better reflect the values that we want for all our communities, no matter where we come from, or how we got here. Compassion and care are core Australian values, and we must not pass this bill as it is in direct contravention to the kind of society we want to see here.

Yours sincerely,