

Dear Sir/Madam

I would like to tell you my family's story.

I have dreamed of living in Australia since I first visited my relatives in Sydney in 1999 when I was 18 years old. I have since visited twice more, even convincing my (now) husband to get married there in 2007. He has now become as desperate as me to relocate ourselves to Australia, especially now that we have a 2 year old daughter. We see Australia as a wonderful and enriching place to raise our family. This was one of the things that drew me to Australia in the first place – the way of life, the camaraderie, the pride that people have in their country. These are things, I feel, are deeply lacking in the UK at present (and have been for a long time).

We first began thinking of a move to Australia in 2006 but I only had a couple of years of experience in my field at that time. We then decided to put off the move for a few years until I had more experience in my job. I work in the energy industry in the UK (electricity specifically). I am trained to do the job of an electrical draftsman/project administrator, however my educational degree is not in electrical engineering which makes the new Skilled Migration requirements very difficult for me. I know, from looking at job vacancies, that I could get a job doing exactly what I do now very easily but many energy companies will not sponsor someone without permanent residency. This is where my problem lies. The DIAC, under instruction from the Minister of Immigration, are now exercising their powers to stop the migration program whenever they want with no regard for people's feelings and wallets. We have so far paid out £1300 for Migration Agents fees, £110 for IELTS fees (I got an 8.5 overall by the way), £400 for Vetassess Skills Assessment, and £150 on certifying documents. I know that this isn't much compared to the amounts that some have paid out but this is a lot of money for us to spend out now with the threat of capping and ceasing looming over us. This is without the final payment of £650 due to our Migration Agent and the DIAC application fee of approx \$2500.

My uncle, who lives in Sydney, had offered to sponsor us but even this option is not immune to the capping and ceasing. My uncle, who is UK born, has been living in Australia since the 1970's, married an Australian and has brought up his own family. He has contributed throughout to the Australian economy (through paying taxes and home ownership) and has never been paid benefits. He is now an Australian citizen. My grandmother also emigrated to Australia in the 1990's to help out my uncle who was experiencing medical issues with his wife at the time and needed family support. My uncle is still experiencing difficulties and my grandmother (due to age) is unable to help as much as she once did. I would have liked to be able to help my family once we got out there.

Finally, in my opinion, to allow the Minister of Immigration these unlimited powers to cap and cease is a step too far. It makes a mockery of the Australian principle of giving someone 'a fair go'. These people, no matter how many apply and are in the pipeline, have applied and met the strict criteria at the time of lodgement and to have the prospect of capping and ceasing looming over them leaves them in limbo, not knowing if they will ever achieve their dream of moving to Australia for a better life. I understand the need to monitor and continually change the migration process in order to provide Australia with a skilled workforce and I am in favour of that but the Minister of Immigration, it seems wants to go further than that and throw every applicant's lives into chaos whenever he wants. I hope that you don't allow him these unlimited powers.