

Committee Secretary
Senate Legal and Constitutional affairs committee
Po Box 6100
Parliament House
Canberra
ACT
2600



4/3/12

Dear committee members,

I write the following submission in relation to the senate enquiry into marriage visa classes.

It is my considered view that prospective marriage visas are open to considerable fraudulent misuse in terms of assisting people to try a much faster route to gain entry into Australia than would otherwise have been the case through normal immigration channels.

This is not a new concern by any means and over the years various community members have admitted publicly to having previously used the prospect of marriage as a means to helping someone fraudulently enter Australia when there has been no genuine relationship and thus no genuine marriage.

There have been both sham marriages or in some cases no marriage at all.

I note however with particular interest the term of reference “the administration, application, and effectiveness of eligibility criteria in relation to the prospective visa program, with a special focus on, but not limited to, protections against fraud, age differences, regard for cultural practices and relationship criteria.”

It is becoming increasingly a matter of concern that young women may be being exploited and sent to Australia to marry someone not of their own choosing. Such an occurrence is an abuse of their human rights, an affront to the culture and laws of Australia and continues the practice of exploitation of young women that remains a world-wide problem.

A young woman with certain cultural backgrounds- particularly from Islamic countries and with Islamic tradition, would have absolutely no say in the matter of an arranged marriage. There have been numerous cases of young girls being sent off to the United Kingdom for example for arranged marriages only to suffer repeated rape, violence, and servitude for the rest of their miserable lives unless they have been able to escape.

These young women have often been from Muslim families in Pakistan for example. There is no reason to believe that what has been occurring on a large scale in the United Kingdom is not happening if on a smaller scale in Australia.

In Islamic culture- and I am by no means suggesting that this problem only occurs in Islamic culture- the views of a young woman in respect of a marriage arranged for her by her parents- especially her father, would count for absolutely nothing. A young girl objecting to such an arrangement would face severe punishment from her family. In Islamic culture the duty of a young girl is often thought to be merely to marry and produce children- any thought of a career or independent thought is strongly discouraged.

I believe that prospective marriage visas as they presently stand are very likely to be aiding the exploitation of young girls through arranged marriages.

It is my view that with general immigration- people seeking to make Australia their home must accept the laws and culture of Australia and indeed make a commitment to uphold those values irrespective of cultural background.

The life of a young girl sent to Australia to marry often an older man who would be aware of the situation of the arranged marriage- would be one of a most miserable existence indeed. Although slavery was abolished many years ago in Britain- slavery of a sort still exists in reality in the case of young women forced into servitude through arranged marriages.

The Australian nation through its parliament is obliged to do everything in its power to prevent young women entering into lives of suffering on our soil. We should in fact be doing all we can to fight the practice of arranged marriages and exploitation of girls and women around the world.

This worthy enquiry should also focus on the age of young girls being granted prospective marriage visas. The enquiry should also focus on greater enforcement to ensure that the ages of visa recipients are in fact in line with the age claimed on their papers.

I believe the Australian government should look at sending its diplomats and agents to make abundantly clear to countries that have both a history of arranged marriages and high immigration rates to Australia- such as India and Pakistan for example and convey the strongest possible message about Australian laws and culture and our respect for the equality of women.

Finally our nations laws, values and culture are based on our Judeo-Christian heritage which is undeniable despite the attempts in recent years to do so by some, and this heritage has underlined our nations view about the inherent equality of men and women and the respect due even to children.

I commend the senate for establishing this enquiry and trust that the enquiry will be willing to rise above the fog and tides of political correctness and establish the truth about these very important matters,

Yours sincerely,

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