

Attn: **Senate Standing Committees on Community Affairs**

Dear Committee Members,

I write this submission with respect to the Australian Citizenship Legislation Amendment (Strengthening the Requirements for Australian Citizenship and Other Measures) Bill 2017.

In April 2011, I migrated to Australia from New Zealand with my daughter, and my wife who is herself an Australian citizen by birth. As a New Zealand citizen, I was automatically granted a special category 444 temporary visa on arrival. Our six-year-old daughter is applying to become an Australian citizen and we now have three additional Australian children.

After working for four years in Australia I made a commitment to attempt university education to further my career and support my family. To do so with the full benefits of citizenship, in August 2015 I took out a loan to cover the \$6865.00 cost for permanent residency. On 5<sup>th</sup> October 2016, I was granted a permanent partner 801 visa. Based on the general residence requirement, I expected to be eligible to apply for citizenship in October 2017. As a result, in preparation and anticipation of university education, I enrolled in an enabling Foundation Studies program with the University of South Australia which I am due to complete this year.

The Australian Citizenship Legislation Amendment Bill 2017 will change the general residence requirement, requiring individuals to be permanent residents in Australia for at least four years before becoming eligible for Australian citizenship, despite any time spent in Australia already as a temporary resident. With respect to how this part of the bill affects me personally, my concerns and recommendations are expressed as follows:

- The intention of the four-year wait as stated by the Prime Minister is ‘... there’s more time to integrate to be part of the Australian community...’ ([Malcolm Turnbull](#), 20 April 2017). As a New Zealander who has spent more than six years living and working in Australia, has an Australian family and speaks the English language, I’m not sure how I could integrate further without pledging allegiance to this country in a citizenship ceremony. Thus, for people in my situation, delaying citizenship may be counterproductive to the idea of integration.
- Despite acknowledgement of ‘...the special bilateral relationship between Australia and New Zealand...’ ([Explanatory Memorandum](#) 2017, p. 77-78) only New Zealanders on the Skilled Independent 189 (New Zealand) Stream visa are exempt from the four-year wait while other New Zealanders utilising alternative pathways must wait four-years under this bill. In the six years I have lived in Australia, I have contributed over \$50,000 in income tax. Moreover, when I applied for the permanent partner 801 visa, the Skilled Independent 189 (New Zealand) Stream visa did not exist. I recommend the government does not discriminate between New Zealanders in different pathways and instead exempts all individuals who entered Australia with a New Zealand special category 444 visa from the four-year waiting period.
- The four-year PR waiting period should not apply to individuals who were already permanent residents on the date the announcement was made by the government. As I undertook substantial financial costs when applying for permanent residency with the goal of obtaining citizenship in October 2017, and having made significant personal life decisions such as to enrol and undertake a Foundation Studies program in preparation for university education once granted citizenship, it is unfair for the government to move the goalposts for citizenship

for people like myself who were already permanent residents when the change was announced. With this bill, I will not be eligible to apply for citizenship until 2021. As people have made significant decisions based on the current laws, the four-year PR waiting period should not apply to individuals who were already permanent residents on the date the proposed changes were announced – 20<sup>th</sup> April 2017.

I appreciate you taking the time to consider my submission.

Sincerely,

Adelaide | South Australia